

Political-Organisational Report
Adopted at the XIX Congress of the CPI(M)
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Part I

INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

The period since the 18th Congress has seen the continuing hegemonic drive of United States' imperialism. Through its overbearing military supremacy, the US seeks to maintain the dominance of imperialist finance capital and strengthen its stranglehold over global resources, especially energy resources. The strategy of the US for world domination, which combines imperialist globalisation with aggressive militarism, is trampling upon the economic self-reliance of countries through the imposition of neoliberal policies; challenging and subverting political sovereignty of nations through military invasions, sanctions, blockades and covert interventions; and causing immense suffering and destruction of lives and livelihoods across the world. The period since the last Congress has also witnessed growing worldwide resistance to the hegemony and militarism of the US and strengthening of the trend towards multipolarity in world relations. The economic problems faced by the US, an outcome of the inherent contradictions of imperialist globalisation, have aggravated in recent times. Deepening recession in the US can have serious implications for the world economy.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

Global Imbalances

Over the past one decade, global economic growth has mainly been driven by the US economy. This has been reflected in the widening external deficit (current account deficit) of the US, i.e., imports of goods and services by the US exceeding its exports as well as incomes and transfers from abroad (interest, dividends, remittances, foreign aid, etc). The current account deficit of the US, which was around \$140 billion in 1997 or 1.7% of the US GDP, witnessed a continuous and dramatic increase to over \$800 billion or 6% of the GDP in 2006. This unprecedented level of current account deficit enabled countries across the world, to grow through exports of goods and services to the US market. While the adoption of neoliberal policies has meant shrinking public expenditure and a shift away from domestic market-oriented growth in most countries, the US has provided the major market for the export-oriented growth regime under imperialist globalisation. The benefits of such growth have been largely restricted to the successful exporters to the US, especially the developing countries of South East Asia, China and the oil-exporting countries (OPEC).

Growing current account deficits have also meant that the US economy became increasingly indebted, but this growing indebtedness was sustained by huge capital inflows into the US from the rest of the world. The ability of the US to attract capital inflows despite growing external indebtedness is based upon dollar hegemony. The US has maintained dollar hegemony by controlling resources across the world, like oil and gas, and ensuring that their values remain stable vis-à-vis the dollar, through

military interventions if necessary. Since the dollar was conceived as the most stable currency, sovereign governments, transnational corporations and rich persons across the world hold bulk of their wealth and assets and undertake most international transactions in dollars. This ensured a high and stable international demand for the dollar and enabled the US to borrow cheaply from the rest of the world. Moreover, while the productive sectors of the US economy suffered due to cheap imports of goods and services from abroad, the financial and real estate sectors in the US witnessed booms since the mid-1990s and offered high rates of return on financial investments. Therefore, even though the current account deficit of the US widened and external indebtedness grew, capital inflows into the US continued.

US Recession and Prospects of a Global Slowdown

Despite increasing income inequalities within the US, credit-driven consumption growth of the upper and middle classes kept the economy going since the mid-1990s. The level of indebtedness of American households reached unprecedented levels during this period—mainly due to housing loans (mortgages) and consumer loans (credit cards). Much of the increase in household indebtedness was because of the stock and property market booms, which increased the financial wealth of many households, made them feel richer and drove them into greater borrowing and spending. As was noted in the 17th Congress of the CPI (M), the first jolt to this debt-induced consumption spending in the US came with the stock market crash and the collapse of the ICT boom in the US in 2000. This led to a recession in the US in 2001, which also caused a global slowdown. However, the real estate boom resumed, which led to economic recovery both in the US as well as in the global economy from 2002. But the real estate boom was based upon reckless lending strategies of mortgage lending banks. In order to push up their credit business, these mortgage lenders made housing loans even to borrowers, whose ability to repay the loans were always doubtful (sub-prime lending). Such borrowers were enticed into housing loans by misleading offers of concessional interest rates and easier terms of repayment, in order to boost demand for housing and construction related activities and increase property prices. These loans were then packaged into securities that were sold off to other banks and financial institutions, in complex transactions that have been made possible by financial deregulation.

The sub-prime lending crisis in the US, which surfaced in 2006, was triggered by increasing default on such housing mortgage loans. With increasing defaults and repossession of those houses by the mortgage lenders, the housing bubble eventually went bust. Sharp falls in property prices also led to the collapse of hundreds of mortgage lenders engaged in sub-prime lending, with even the largest mortgage lender in the US, Countrywide Financial, heading towards bankruptcy. Wall Street based banks, which had made huge investments in sub-prime mortgage based securities in order to reap speculative gains on the basis of the property bubble, also suffered huge losses. The declared sub-prime losses of Citigroup, the largest bank in the US, and Merrill Lynch, the biggest brokerage house, together amounted to over \$30 billion in 2007. Several other OECD countries, which witnessed similar real estate bubbles over the past decade, are also witnessing a downturn in their property markets leading to huge financial losses for banks engaged in such lending. Switzerland-based UBS and France's Société Générale have all suffered billions of dollars in sub-prime losses in 2007. The UK-based bank Northern Rock had to be

nationalised in order to save it from collapsing. Estimates suggest that total sub-prime losses of multinational banks and financial companies would amount to over \$450 billion.

Recently, Bear Stearns, the fifth largest investment bank in the US, had to be bailed out by the Federal Reserve (Central Bank in the US) using public funds, in order to prevent a systemic collapse. The legal provision invoked by the Federal Reserve in order to extend loans to bail out Bear Stearns, was last used to bail out banks during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Finally, another investment bank, JP Morgan Chase, bought off Bear Stearns at an astoundingly low price of \$2 per share, which meant a discount of 93% on the price prevailing in the market the day before it was bought. The fact that the Federal Reserve had to subsidise the acquisition of a failed private bank by another one using taxpayer's money, has completely exposed the myth of efficiently functioning financial markets in the era of globalisation.

The collapse of the real estate bubble in the US, besides precipitating a recession in the US economy has also given rise to a worldwide credit crunch, because of the huge losses suffered by banks and financial companies. Stock markets across the world, from the Wall Street to the Asian markets including India, have witnessed successive crashes in the first few months of 2008 due to fears of a US recession. The US establishment has been desperately trying to salvage the situation by cutting interest rates sharply, in order to help the financial system in reducing losses and reviving the stock market. Fiscal measures like tax cuts and increased spending plans are also being considered. However, these measures cannot prevent the recession in the US economy and its global impact.

The Western imperialist powers expect the fast growing economies in the developing world, like China and India, to provide the growth momentum for the world economy in the coming days. However, the fact that high growth in these economies is itself partly dependent on the US market, points towards the difficulty in sustaining such growth in the face of a slowdown in the US. A global downturn resulting from the US recession seems more likely at this stage. The IMF has already projected a slowdown of GDP growth in the US to 1.5% in 2008 from 2.2% in 2007. GDP growth rates in the advanced economies and the world economy as a whole are also projected to decelerate in 2008 to 1.8% and 4.1% respectively, from 2.6% and 4.9% in 2007. The actual situation can turn out to be worse than what these IMF projections suggest.

Weakening Dollar

The dollar has been weakening vis-à-vis the Euro and many other currencies in recent times, following the financial turbulence surrounding the sub-prime lending crisis. The IMF has reported that the share of the dollar in global foreign exchange reserves has fallen from 71.1% in March 1999 to a record low of 63.8% in September 2007. The weakening of the dollar is being further aggravated by the sharp cuts in the interest rates in the US, which are being undertaken in order to deal with the recession. Lower interest rates make the dollar less attractive to hold and encourage capital outflow from the US. A sharp fall in the value of the dollar will have adverse consequences for the global financial system, which is based on dollar hegemony. Currencies of several countries, whose value is pegged to the dollar, can also witness instability if the value of the dollar is threatened. Given its unilateralist and

hegemonic approach, the US will never follow the policy of coordinating with other countries to adjust the global imbalances. Rather the US would seek to take advantage of the dollar depreciation to increase exports and reduce imports, in order to bring down its high current account deficit, thus hurting growth and employment in the developing countries. With growing job losses, protectionist demands like clamping down on outsourcing, are also likely to strengthen within the US.

The coming days would see intensified efforts on the part of the US to protect its home market; pressurising other countries, especially developing countries, to further open up their markets for US goods and services; and aggressive efforts to protect dollar hegemony. Oil prices have also increased manifold following the invasion and devastation of Iraq and crossed the \$ 100 per barrel mark in early 2008. Prices of other commodities have also risen in the international market during this period. Faced with the threat of growing inflation, the US would also step up its efforts to control energy and other resources across the world. This will be accompanied by intensified militarism.

Growing US Militarism

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, world military expenditure, which had come down in the post-cold war period from around \$1,200 billion in 1988 to \$800 billion in 1996, has seen a 37% rise since 1997 to reach \$1,204 billion in 2006. Out of this, military spending by the US at \$ 528.7 billion in 2006 accounted for nearly 44% of world military expenditure. The US moved from a budget surplus of \$86 billion in 2000 to a budget deficit of \$434 billion in 2006 under the Bush administration, with the defence budget increasing from 3% of US GDP in 2000 to over 4% in 2006. Faced with a recession, the Bush administration has further stepped up deficit financed military expenditure, with the US defence budget reaching \$623 billion for 2007–08, which is almost double the amount when Bush took office in 2000 and the largest US defence budget (in real terms) since World War II. \$142 billion will be spent in 2007–08 for the “war on terror” in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Globalisation and International Finance

The growth and expansion of international finance capital continues unabated under imperialist globalisation. The assets and profits of multinational banks and non-bank financial companies like insurance firms, mutual funds and pension funds have grown considerably during this period. Besides, opaque and unregulated financial entities like hedge funds and private equity firms, which mobilise money from rich clients and make huge profits by undertaking risky and highly speculative ventures, are also dominating the financial landscape. The average *daily* turnover in the foreign exchange markets, which had fallen from \$1.5 trillion in 1998 to \$1.2 trillion in 2001, rose to \$1.9 trillion in 2004 and further to \$3.2 trillion in 2007. The daily volume of international foreign exchange transactions is presently around *80 times* more than the daily volume of world trade in goods and services taken together. Such huge amounts of finance capital are being moved around the world by multinational banks and financial companies, making enormous profits through speculation and capital gains.

According to the World Investment Report, out of a total of \$1,306 billion of global FDI inflows in 2006, \$880 billion was on account of cross-border Mergers and

Acquisitions, with increased involvement of financial entities like private equity firms and hedge funds in such activity. While the MNCs from the industrialized countries continue to dominate capital exports, an increasing number of giant corporations from the developing countries are also engaging in cross-border acquisitions, often in league with international financial entities. The net outcome of finance driven globalisation is the increased concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of MNCs, which accounted for 10% of world GDP and one-third of global exports in 2006. The share of extractive industries in global FDI is also showing a rise reflecting increased interest of MNCs in oil, gas and metallic minerals.

Imperialist globalisation and financial opening is resulting in a net flow of resources from the developing countries to the advanced economies in the form of interest payments on debt, profit remittances by MNCs and investments made in the financial markets in developed economies by the corporates and the rich of the developing countries. Moreover, developing countries together hold over \$3 trillion of foreign exchange reserves, typically held in “secure assets” in developed countries, including US Treasury Bills. This further contributes to resource flows from the developing to the advanced economies. The neoliberal policies currently being pursued in most countries are resulting in widening wealth and income inequalities between as well as within countries. The *Human Development Report (HDR), 2007/2008* reports that more than 80% of the world’s population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. The wasteful consumption patterns of the imperialist countries, especially the US, have also led to unsustainable levels of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emission, which have precipitated the crisis of global warming resulting in climate change. This poses a big threat to the environment and the livelihoods of poor people, especially those in the developing countries.

Impasse at the Doha Round of WTO

The Doha round of negotiations in the WTO was supposed to be a “development” oriented one, promising to address the concerns of the developing countries. However, the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference in 2005 yielded a declaration involving another round of tariff cuts on agricultural and industrial products by developing countries and commitment to open up their services sectors, in return for pitiful concessions made by the US and the EU in terms of reduction in their agricultural export subsidies in future. Even these concessions turned out to be deceptive, with the US stubbornly refusing to reduce its huge farm subsidies and cut agricultural tariffs in order to provide greater market access to the developing countries. There are also differences between the US and EU on the question of agricultural subsidies. These persisting differences have prevented any final agreement and conclusion of the Doha Round so far, although it was supposed to conclude by 2006.

With the tenure of the Bush administration nearing its end in 2008, efforts are being made to pressurize the developing countries to accept the terms being set by the developed countries. The NAMA-11 group of developing countries, including South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia and India, has continued to resist the efforts to impose sharp cuts in applied and bound rates of industrial tariffs on developing countries through the Swiss formula. The G-33, a group of 45 developing countries including Indonesia, China, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria, Cuba, etc., have also

pursued the interests of small and marginal farmers in the agriculture negotiations and advocated trade protection in the form of Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanisms. Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia have continued to resist the agreement on Services. None of the major areas of negotiations have resulted in any agreement so far. Successful conclusion of the Doha round seems unlikely with increasing protectionist demands being voiced in the US.

STRATEGIC SCENARIO

US Military Offensive and Resistance in West Asia

Bloodshed and destruction continue in Iraq, which, according to latest estimates, have led to over 1 million deaths since the US invasion and occupation in 2003. The US policy of divide and rule has led to a virtual three-way division of Iraq on ethnic and sectarian lines. However, in spite of sectarian divisions, the Iraqi resistance to the occupation has continued, which has prevented a smooth transition to a pliant regime. The US strategy is to create permanent US military bases in Iraq and establish the dominant control of US-based companies over Iraq's oil resources. The US-backed Iraqi Government drafted a new legislation in 2007, aimed at privatizing the nationalised oil industry in Iraq and putting it under the control of a Council dominated by US-based big oil companies. While the legislation is yet to be passed by the Iraqi parliament because of internal differences, production-sharing contracts are currently being negotiated with the big oil companies by the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The European Union and Israel will be the two major consumers of Iraqi energy. The necessary pipeline system for transporting energy is being developed through Turkey.

The 18th Congress of the CPI (M) had noted that the US considers dominance in West Asia and the control of energy resources of the region as central to its global strategy. The Bush administration's escalating confrontation with Iran, another oil-rich country, has to be seen in the same light. The bogey of nuclear weapons is sought to be used against Iran, just as in the case of Iraq, to build up the case for military intervention. At the behest of the US, two rounds of sanctions were imposed on Iran by the UN Security Council in December 2006 and March 2007. However, the US National Intelligence Council's report on Iran's nuclear programme, which became public in December 2007, has clearly concluded that Iran does not have an on-going nuclear weapons programme. This has been a setback for the Bush administration. Despite this and the International Atomic Energy Agency's affirmation that Iran is cooperating with it, the US along with its Western allies Britain and France, has insisted on the UN Security Council imposing a third round of sanctions on Iran.

US efforts to target Iran are also part of a strategy to browbeat any country, which can pose a challenge to Israel, its surrogate state, in the West Asian region. Backed by the US, Israel has imposed an economic blockade against Palestine ever since the Hamas won the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council in January 2006. The US and the EU denied recognition to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. The Israelis launched a military offensive in Gaza in 2007, killing several civilians, destroying much of its infrastructure and abducting 60 leading Hamas representatives in the Palestinian Authority, including 20 ministers and members of parliament. The Annapolis Conference held in November 2007 was sponsored by Bush as an effort to

force a settlement on the Palestinians, without addressing the basic issues arising out of the Israeli occupation. But the US and Israel have so far failed to push through a settlement on the basis of a truncated Palestinian state without any control over its borders and its people living in Bantustans ringed by Israeli forces.

Unfortunately, however, the resistance in Palestine has split, with the Fata and Hamas now taking different tracks. This split has emboldened Israel to try and isolate Gaza, hoping its people will turn against the Hamas, who currently control Gaza. The latest brutal siege of Gaza has led to immense sufferings for the civilians—supply of food, fuel and medicines have been stopped, power supply has been cut-off affecting emergency services in hospitals, drinking water supply and sewage disposal. Israel has killed several civilians in its latest offensive in Gaza and has threatened to inflict a “holocaust” on Palestinians. Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in July 2006 met with failure and the resistance forces led by Hezbollah emerged victorious. Since then, Israel has widened the attack against Hezbollah even outside Lebanon with the recent assassination of its military operations chief Imad Mughniyah in Damascus.

Continued resistance against Israel by the Palestinian movements, the successful resistance to Israeli aggression in Lebanon led by the Hezbollah, the resistance against the US occupation in Iraq and the positions adopted by Iran have not allowed the US and Israel’s strategy of domination in West Asia to succeed so far. But a decisive defeat for imperialist forces in West Asia and dismantling of the occupation regimes there demands the widest unity of the people of that region.

Expansion of the NATO

Enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a vital component of the “Project for the New American Century” aimed at establishing American global hegemony in the post-Cold War era. In spite of assurances given to the leadership of the former USSR that the NATO would convert itself into a political organisation, the successive administrations in Washington have continued with the expansion of NATO into Central Europe and the Baltic region in consonance with the US strategy. The Bush administration has greatly expanded NATO’s role by persuading the member countries to accept the alliance’s “out-of-area” operations, which envisage a global role for the organisation beyond its traditional sphere of activity in the European continent. The Bush administration has also broadened NATO’s charter of responsibility in meeting “21st century challenges,” such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and energy security and has started projecting NATO as a security organisation whose activities worldwide need not necessarily be mandated by the United Nations. In order to facilitate NATO’s global role, the alliance has embarked upon the task of building up a multi-tiered system of partnership with important regional states that share “values” and security priorities with the Western alliance in general and the US in particular. NATO is also being integrated into the National Missile Defence system that is currently being developed by the US.

Underlying the US objectives behind NATO expansion is the need to re-establish its trans-Atlantic leadership role and secure the backing of the Western alliance in the pursuit of its global strategy. With the coming of rightwing and pro-US governments in Germany and France in the recent period, the US is able to accelerate its agenda vis-à-vis NATO. The US intends to shape NATO as a politico-security vehicle that

advances the containment policy towards Russia and China. NATO also provides a US-led framework of collective security, which enables Washington to selectively engage the UN in theatres or issues where it suits US interests and to bypass the UN where it is expedient to do so. The NATO is embarking on another round of expansion of its membership at its forthcoming summit to be held in Bucharest, Romania, in April 2008.

The Balkan region continues to be an important laboratory where the NATO's new role is tested out. The recent secession of Kosovo from Serbia, backed by the NATO forces, is clearly a part of the effort to encourage ethnic divisions and secessionism in countries outside NATO's membership and weaken their territorial integrity. The Eurasian region, the Black Sea and Trans-Caucasus have emerged as priority areas for NATO operations. The US has established military bases in Bulgaria and Romania and speeding up the NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia, which will bring NATO right on the borders of Russia. NATO has also been making sustained efforts to consolidate partnerships with the Central Asian states, which is a strategically important region flanking Russia, China and Iran. Afghanistan is yet another case where notwithstanding the fig leaf of a UN mandate, NATO virtually conducts the war on its terms. The NATO presence in Afghanistan is virtually open-ended and the US considers the success of the operations in Afghanistan as crucial for the future of NATO as a viable global politico-security organisation. NATO's role is also set to expand in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, as well as the Persian Gulf region. For the first time, NATO and Israel have held joint military exercises. NATO has also forged partnership agreements with several 'pro-West' Arab regimes at a bilateral level and lately within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The forthcoming NATO summit in Bucharest is expected to decide on moving ahead with the US-sponsored missile defence system. The US is also planning to deploy its missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. These developments would further add to the climate of distrust in Russia-US relations.

US Strategy in Africa

In the period since the 18th Congress, the US has begun paying focused attention on Africa. The rationale being advanced is that the US would like to contribute to Africa's development and also assist the countries of the continent to fight terrorism and Islamic extremism. President Bush has paid two visits to the African continent during his second term in office and has appointed a permanent envoy to the Organisation of African Union. The US has established a new military command dedicated for Africa in February 2007 (AFRICOM), on the pattern of its Central Command and Pacific Command, with the intention of having permanent military bases in Africa. The US also hopes to promote partnerships between NATO and the African states. The principal strategic aim of the US is to establish control over Africa's vast energy resources. The US objective is also to safeguard western economic interests in the continent from being eroded consequent upon more and more African countries reaching out to China in recent years. The rapidly growing economic cooperation between China and the African countries has led to apprehensions in the US that the western dominance of the African continent is being threatened.

“Asian NATO”

Along with the eastward expansion of NATO in Europe, which is clearly aimed at containing Russia, the US is also trying to erect a similar security architecture in Asia, along with Japan and Australia, in order to contain China and expand US influence in South East Asia. Japan has been incrementally abandoning its pacifist approach to international affairs, which it adopted in the post-war period. US policy under the Bush administration has accelerated the militarisation of Japan and drawn it into its strategic ambit. Australia has also been an ally of the US in the “war on terror” and had sent troops to Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2007, Japan and Australia signed a security agreement designed to enhance military cooperation between the two countries. Efforts were made to include India in order to form a strategic “quadrilateral” along with the US, Japan and Australia. The joint naval exercise of the four countries in the Bay of Bengal in September 2007 was aimed in this direction.

This vision of an “Asian NATO,” however, has received a setback in recent times with the rightwing pro-US government voted out in Australia recently and the new government deciding to pull out troops from Iraq and improve relations with China. In September 2007, the parliamentary opposition in Japan, which has a majority in the upper house, also blocked the renewal of a special anti-terrorism law to enable the participation of a Japanese naval vessel in a refueling mission as a part of the US-led war in Afghanistan. The opposition to Japan’s participation in US-led military missions outside the UN ambit forced the Prime Minister of Japan to resign although the new Prime Minister has recently pushed through the law by using the two-thirds majority in the lower house. Efforts to become part of US strategic designs in Asia and join the “Asian NATO” have met with protests in India too. However, the attempt to forge a US-led security alliance in Asia involving Japan, Australia and India will continue in future. It is also clear that there is significant opposition to such a US-led security alliance within these countries.

Towards Multipolarity: Russia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Major trends towards multipolarity in world relations have also emerged during this period, countering the US hegemony and unilateralism. Russia has started asserting its independent role in world affairs. Faced with the US strategy of containment, through eastward expansion of the NATO, deploying of anti-ballistic missile systems in Eastern Europe and efforts to control oil and gas resources in Central and West Asia, Russia is also adopting counter strategies. President Putin, in a significant speech delivered at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007 said that a unipolar world is not only “unacceptable but also impossible in today’s world.” He strongly opposed the placing of missiles in Eastern Europe and questioned the purpose of NATO expansion. He asserted that economic potential of the BRIC countries—Brazil, Russia, China and India—would convert into political influence and strengthen multipolarity.

The assertion of Russia’s independent role in world affairs is based upon its growing economic strength. The nationalization of the oil and gas companies in Russia and the sharp increase in energy prices during this period have helped the Russian economic recovery. Russia has been using its state-owned oil and gas companies to provide a counterweight to the US-backed oil companies like ChevronTexaco and ExxonMobil

in Europe and Asia. Russia has also sought to strengthen its ties with former Soviet republics, which are not under US influence, as well as develop independent relations with Germany and France. In the light of NATO expansion, Russia has temporarily suspended the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaty, which restricted the deployment of armed forces and conventional weapons along Russia's border with Europe. The Russian Duma voted unanimously to pass the bill. Russia has also declared that it will take counter-measures in terms of missile deployment, if missiles are placed by the US in Eastern Europe.

The most significant security initiative is the continued deepening of strategic ties between Russia and China and broadening of the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which includes Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, besides Russia and China. Mongolia, Iran, Pakistan and India have observer status in the SCO. The SCO held its first military exercises in Russia in August 2007. A security cooperation agreement has also been signed in October 2007 between the SCO and CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation), a security grouping including Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The CSTO has also decided to create its own peace-keeping force. These developments are being widely perceived as a joint effort by Russia and China to develop a countervailing force to the NATO.

Advance of the Left in Latin America

The shift towards the Left in most countries of Latin America is a direct outcome of people's resistance against neoliberal policies imposed by IMF-World Bank backed by US imperialism and mass discontent against their rightwing regimes, which were clients of the US. The leftward shift in Latin America has created opportunities for seeking development alternatives outside the neoliberal model. The US aim to push through the Free Trade Areas of America (FTAA) by the end of 2005 was foiled at the fourth summit of the Americas where Brazil, Venezuela, Paraguay and Uruguay refused to accept the timetable or the content of the agreement. The Banco del Sur or the Bank of the South, was set up in December 2007 at the initiative of Venezuela, involving Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador and Bolivia. This bank, which is headquartered in the Venezuelan capital Caracas, will finance infrastructure projects in the member countries of Latin America and promote regional trade and economic integration. It has the potential of becoming an alternative source of development finance for the Latin American countries, which will reduce their dependence on the imperialist financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

President Evo Morales of Bolivia has joined Cuba and Venezuela to project the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). ALBA is an attempt at regional economic integration which is based upon a vision of social welfare and economic complementarity and cooperation as an alternative to neoliberal trade liberalisation which promotes competition between countries. A Treaty of Commerce for the People (TCP) has been signed between Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia in 2006, which Nicaragua also joined in January 2007. There are also four observer states in ALBA—Ecuador, Uruguay, Dominican Republic and St. Kitts, which are expected to join in future. The ALBA-TCP seeks to promote trade and investments for people's welfare, provide free education and healthcare to all member states, integrate the energy sectors of member countries for mutual benefit, ensure land redistribution and food

security within the member states and create alternative media to counter the US based and regional neoliberal media and promote indigenous Latin American culture.

In Bolivia, President Evo Morales has nationalised the oil and gas industries and initiated radical land reforms. Hugo Chavez won the Presidential elections in Venezuela in December 2006 with 62.8% of the vote. However, the move to amend the Constitution to strengthen the socialist orientation in Venezuela was defeated narrowly—49.3% to 50.7%—in the referendum held in December 2007. The results of the referendum show the growing consolidation of the rightwing opposition forces in Venezuela. In Bolivia too, the effort to bring a new Constitution is being violently opposed by rightwing organisations and big business, which are fanning sectarian violence against indigenous people in the richer provinces. After winning the elections in Ecuador in 2006, President Rafael Correa has initiated radical reforms of the country's political and economic system. A new constituent assembly was created in 2007 after the landslide victory in the referendum with 81.7% voting in favour. President Correa's supporters, Acuerdo País won 80 out of the 130 seats of the constituent assembly. A legislation has recently been enacted by the constituent assembly, institutionalizing progressive taxation measures like taxes on inheritance and unused land in estates and also raising the minimum wages. Other countries like Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina have also seen the adoption of some progressive measures although their Governments have not made a complete break from the neoliberal policy paradigm.

Socialist Countries

China has continued to witness rapid economic growth, with the GDP growth rate reaching over 11% in 2006 and 2007, which is also leading to its expanded influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Alongside rapid growth following the opening up of its economy, China is also experiencing the problems of growing inequalities— income-wise, region-wise, and between urban and rural areas. The 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China held in October 2007 has acknowledged these problems and suggested steps to tackle them. In his keynote speech to the Congress, Comrade Hu Jintao has said: “We will increase transfer payments, intensify the regulation of incomes through taxation, break business monopolies, create equal opportunities, and overhaul income distribution practices with a view to gradually reversing the growing income disparity.” China has adopted a “new socialist countryside” policy under its Eleventh Five Year Plan (2006–11), which seeks to increase support to agriculture and increase farm incomes, provide free school education and subsidised healthcare in rural areas and build rural infrastructure. China has also passed a new labour law in 2007, which provides employment protection and strengthens social security for the workers. Vietnam has made steady economic progress and made strides in reducing poverty. Between 1993 and 2006, the number of households living below the national poverty line in Vietnam declined from 58% to 18%.

South Asia

In Pakistan, the dastardly assassination of Benazir Bhutto during the election campaign did not succeed in disrupting the election process. The popular mood for the restoration of a democratic system got reflected in the election mandate, which saw

the Pakistan Peoples' Party emerging as the frontrunner with 87 seats and Nawaz Sharif's PML (N) getting 66 seats, out of a total of 272. Musharraf-backed PML (Q) was badly defeated. This has set the stage for a coalition government led by the PPP. The people's verdict in the elections was clearly against the US-backed authoritarian Musharraf regime as well as the growing menace of religious extremism.

The popular movement in Nepal against the monarchy achieved significant success. However, the failure to hold the Constituent Assembly elections as scheduled, twice, has led to complications, which has affected the political process. Meanwhile, a militant movement developed in the Terai region demanding proportional representation for the Madhesi people in institutions like the parliament and also the security forces. An eight-point agreement has recently been signed between the Seven Party alliance Government in Nepal and the United Democratic Madhesi Front providing federal autonomy for Madhes without affecting national integrity and sovereignty of Nepal. Successful conduct of elections to the Constituent Assembly, scheduled in April, can pave the way for the setting up of a democratic republic in Nepal.

Hostilities between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE resumed in 2006. The Sri Lankan Government gave notice to call off the ceasefire agreement, raising fears of a full-scale war. Recently an All-Party Representatives Conference has made some interim recommendations for the devolution of powers and implementation of the language provisions in the Sri Lankan Constitution. There can be no military solution to the Tamil question. The unity of Sri Lanka can be preserved and peace restored only through the provision of autonomy for the Tamil-speaking areas.

CONCLUSION

Intensifying the struggle against US hegemony and imperialist globalisation assumes central importance in the current context. National sovereignty has to be defended against the imperialist onslaught and the trends towards multi-polarity in the world needs to be strengthened. The CPI (M) will continue to forge its international ties with the progressive workers and communist movements worldwide in order to achieve this objective. The CPI (M) will also continue to rouse the anti-imperialist sentiments of the Indian people and mount pressure on the Indian government to steadfastly pursue an independent foreign policy, which promotes multipolarity in world relations, defend sovereignty of nations, and strengthens the Non-Aligned Movement. The CPI (M) will firmly oppose India becoming a subordinate strategic ally of the United States and thereby contribute to the strengthening of the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle.

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLITICAL-TACTICAL LINE OF THE 18TH CONGRESS

The 18th Congress had spelt out the political-tactical line which was centered on three tasks. The struggle against the communal forces and the policies of liberalisation were to be carried forward together. The third interrelated task was the anti-imperialist struggle. We have to make an assessment of how the Party undertook this work in the last three years.

Since the policies of the UPA government are directly related to the struggle against the neoliberal policies and against imperialist penetration, it will be appropriate to begin with our attitude to the UPA government. We should assess how we dealt with the policies and measures of the government which had a bearing on the people's livelihood, living conditions and foreign policy.

I Attitude to UPA Government

The 18th Congress Political Resolution had set out the Party's approach to the UPA government. While extending support to the UPA government, the resolution had stated that the Party would play an independent role. That role required criticizing and opposing such steps of the government which are against the people's interests or are a departure from the CMP and those which are a continuation of the policies of the previous government. The independent role also entailed that the Party and the Left conduct political campaigns to project the independent positions of the Left and popular mobilizations and struggles to defend the rights and livelihood of the people. Further, the independent role of the Party does not mean confining to or dealing only with the CMP and government-related issues. It means taking up the demands of the Left and democratic programme set out by the Party. The issues of land, wages, democratic rights of the working people have to be taken up and struggles conducted.

In the last three years, the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee have sought to put this approach into practice and adhere to the framework set out in the Party Congress. The Party has strived to ensure that the UPA government fulfills the pro-people commitments it made in the Common Minimum Programme. The Party and the mass organisations have conducted a number of campaigns and mass mobilizations for getting these measures in the CMP implemented. At the same time the Party has consistently opposed the direction of the economic policies of the UPA government which has been to push forward with neoliberal policies. The Left parties submitted notes to the UPA-Left Coordination Committee on all major policy questions which arose. Altogether 20 such notes were submitted. These are apart from the notes on the nuclear cooperation agreement which were taken up in the committee set up to examine the nuclear issue.

A review of our efforts vis-à-vis the UPA government shows that it is the persistence of the Party and the Left which finally resulted in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act being adopted in its present form. It is due to the amendments made by the Left that the flexibility of schemes, one-third reservation of jobs for women and other improvements made. Similarly, it is the dogged pursuance of the Scheduled

Tribe (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill by the Left and the Party in particular that saw the legislation coming through. The bill introduced by the government was totally inadequate. It is through the Standing Committee of Parliament in which our MPs played an important role, that major changes were made. The government was not willing to accept most of the major amendments proposed by the Standing Committee which were: (i) the cut-off date; (ii) the extent of land that can be held in the forest (iii); inclusion of non-tribal communities as forest dwellers; and (iv) provision of gram sabhas to decide the rights in the forests. After repeated discussions in the UPA-Left Coordination Committee, finally it is through negotiations directly with the government in parliament that the major recommendations of the Standing Committee were accepted. It took more pressure for the government to adopt the rules and finally notify the Act on January 1, 2008.

The UPA-Left Coordination Committee meetings which were held since the 18th Congress till November 2006 became a forum where a struggle over the respective class positions of the Congress and the Left took place on privatization, disinvestment, pension, opening up of banking, and so on. On these questions, different approaches were reflected. When the government announced a 10 per cent disinvestment in the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. despite our opposition, the matter was discussed in the Coordination Committee. When the government defended its stand and stuck to its position, the Left parties decided in July 2005 to suspend their participation in the Coordination Committee. The Left parties cited the CMP position that the *navaratna* companies are to be strengthened and they could go to the market to raise capital if they wish to expand their operations. There was no reference to disinvestment of shares of *navaratna* companies. The Left parties rejected the government's compromise proposal of reducing the disinvestment to 8 per cent of the shares with an assurance that no future disinvestment of shares would be there in *navaratna* companies. Finally, the matter was resolved when the UPA chairperson in a letter conveyed the government's decision not to proceed with the disinvestment of BHEL shares.

The subsequent meetings were dominated by the government's efforts to push through the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Bill which would have led to the privatization of the pension funds of the government employees and an amendment to the Banking Regulation Act to remove the voting cap of 10% in the board of directors to facilitate 7.5 FDI in Indian private banks. The Left parties resolutely opposed these measures and in the case of pension funds submitted an alternative proposal. The Left parties also voiced their opposition to FDI in retail trade, the vote in the IAEA on the Iran nuclear issue, and pressed for the Tribal Forest bill and agricultural workers bill. There was no agreement on handing over the Delhi and Mumbai airports to private parties. To counter the UPA's demand for disinvestment in other profit-making public sector units, the Left parties sent a comprehensive note on resource mobilization in March 2006. After the 18th Party Congress, altogether six meetings of the UPA-Left Coordination Committee were held.

On the completion of one year of the UPA in May 2005, the Polit Bureau prepared a critical assessment of the government's performance and this provided the thrust for taking up the issues on which the Party could campaign and mobilize people. Due to our intervention in parliament, some of the provisions of the Right to Information Act

were not diluted; we also got some amendments incorporated in the Domestic Violence Bill to strengthen the provisions.

On the completion of the second year of the UPA government, the Left parties brought out a statement reviewing the performance of the government. As decided in the Central Committee, a comprehensive note was submitted to the UPA on the performance of the UPA government in which we spelt out the areas of concern and the differences that the Left has on policies. We also suggested the steps to be taken in the future. In this meeting, which was held in June 2006, we also conveyed our unhappiness at the functioning of the Coordination Committee. The practice of holding discussions and then announcing that the Left had agreed to go ahead with their policies was objectionable. From that meeting onwards, we discontinued the practice of having statements and briefings to the press. Apart from the economic policy issues, at the request of the Left there were discussions on the question of Jammu & Kashmir, the North East, and the activities of the communal forces particularly with regard to the situation in Gujarat.

In the meetings held in October and November 2006, the UPA government replied to the Left's note on the performance of the government. These discussions did not result in closing the gap between the Congress and the Left on the economic policy issues. In the November meeting which was the last to be held, the Left parties called for the reduction of the petrol and diesel prices, which had been raised by Rs 4 and 2 per litre respectively in June 2006. We proposed that the women's reservation bill and the forest tribal bill be introduced. The government subsequently reduced the petrol and diesel prices in two installments in November 2006 and February 2007 by Rs 4 and 2 respectively.

After November 2006, the UPA-Left Coordination Committee did not meet. The Polit Bureau discussed the matter and decided that we need not take any initiative to revive the coordination committee meetings. This was also the understanding of the other Left parties.

However, we continued with our efforts to get the government to take up some of the unfulfilled commitments in the CMP. After the Congress agreed to take up the women's reservation bill in the winter session of parliament in 2006, a broader meeting of the UPA partners with the Left parties was held. In this meeting, the RJD leader Laloo Prasad Yadav agreed that the bill be introduced. However, within a few days he went back on his word due to pressure from his party. Till now, we have not been able to get the UPA as a whole to agree to introduce the bill despite the fact that all other parties with the exception of the RJD are for the bill.

Reviewing this whole period and our engagement with the UPA government and the struggle over policies, it can be said that it was only because of the CPI(M) and the Left's determination that the two major legislations REGA and Tribal Forest Act could be adopted with their positive features. It is also because of the Party and Left's intervention on a number of issues inside Parliament and outside that certain steps were taken. When the Action Taken Report on the Nanavati Commission Report on the anti-Sikh riots did not accept even the limited recommendations, the Party intervened and placed four demands which were accepted by the government including assurance of compensation for the victims. The Central legislation for OBC

reservations in central government institutions was given a final shape. On the other hand, it was the firm stand of the Party and the Left which prevented a full-fledged entry of FDI in the retail trade, the opening up of the private banking sector to 74 per cent FDI, and stopped the legislation which would have allowed privatization of the pension funds of the government employees. Due to the determined stand taken against disinvestment in the *navaratna* companies and the privatisation of profit-making public sector units, in contrast to the NDA government's period there has not been a single instance of a profit making public sector unit being privatized.

By adhering to the line set out in the 18th Congress, we can claim that we have checked some of the harmful measures and retrograde policies which the government wanted to pursue in the name of reforms. Further, we have also been able to slow down the pace of implementation of neoliberal policies. It is this role of the Party and the Left which has been appreciated by the working class and the common people. On the other side, it is the Left's intervention, in which the Party is in the forefront, that has drawn the criticism and attacks by the big business, rightwing circles and the corporate media.

II Campaigns & Struggles on People's Issues

The agrarian crisis, price rise, unemployment and rising inequalities have all led to popular discontent. The UPA government's failure to tackle the agrarian crisis, price rise and other burning problems must be viewed in the background of its economic policies which favour liberalization and privatisation and promote the interests of international finance capital. During the last three years, the Party has been taking up these issues which affect the working class and people's livelihood.

The Central Committee in its first meeting after the Party Congress gave a call for a campaign on land, food and employment in August and struggles to be conducted based on these issues in September. This campaign was conducted through padayatras, jeep jathas and public meetings. Among the demands were: universalisation of PDS, issuance of BPL cards, improvement of food-for-work programme, distribution of government wasteland, homestead land for agricultural workers, and lifting ban on recruitment in central and state government posts.

In Tamilnadu 95,000 people picketed and courted arrest in 404 centers on September 9. In Orissa, meetings and demonstrations were held in 62 places in which 30,000 people participated. In Madhya Pradesh 147 street corner meetings, 37 public meetings and 24 jathas were held. In Gujarat, 34,000 BPL cards were issued in Bhavnagar and 44,000 at Rajkot due to the struggle. In Punjab, district level jathas were taken out. In Maharashtra, on September 29, over 1.75 lakh people were mobilized in 103 centres in 29 districts. In Tripura, the campaign was conducted in three phases. More than 2 lakh people participated in sixty block-level meetings. The issue of ration card distribution and pattas for land distribution and other local issues were taken up in this campaign. In Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the movement could not be conducted because of local body elections.

The second campaign call given by the Central Committee was the August campaign of 2006. This was the most intensive campaign conducted at the all-India level in

recent times and created enthusiasm among the cadre. For the first time, more than 100 central meetings with speakers decided by the Party centre were held all over the country. This figure excludes West Bengal, which held 300 central meetings, as well as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura. A review of the campaign was conducted and the PB sent out a letter giving a report of the August campaign to all Party units. The review showed that the campaign was planned well by the state committees and there was widespread local campaigns in the form of jathas, cycle jathas, jeep jathas, street corner meetings and processions. In West Bengal one crore (10 million) people participated in all the meetings during this campaign. The review noted the following: (i) The campaign put across our political line, particularly our relationship vis-à-vis the UPA government, before the people with clarity. (ii) The campaign helped the Party in reaching out to new centres. In many areas there was large participation of women, and in some areas minorities, tribals, youth participated in substantial numbers. (iii) The campaign was successful in activating the Party and our sympathizers. (iv) The campaign also underlined the potential that exists if we conduct sustained local struggles on a day-to-day basis on burning problems.

The third call given by the Central Committee was for a fortnight's campaign from August 16 to 30, 2007. The state committees were to concretize demands on the following issues: (1) Demand to curb price rise; (2) PDS for all; (3) on farmers' problems; (4) on retail trade; (5) to curb unemployment; (6) for women's reservation bill; (7) to fight communalism; and (8) against Indo-US nuclear cooperation.

It was decided that one day should be set apart for picketing of central government offices on the issuance of BPL cards and strengthening of the Public Distribution System. Among the highlights of this campaign were the participation of one lakh people in picketing in Kerala outside central government offices on August 20, and the participation of 1.45 lakh people in 133 centres in a sit-in programme in Tripura. In Maharashtra, over 1 lakh people were mobilized by the Party on August 30 at 70 centres in 27 districts. There were 413 street corner meetings in Jharkhand, 12 local jathas were organized in Punjab, 200 street corner meetings were organized and 1,25,000 folders distributed in Delhi, rallies and demonstrations were held in most of the districts in Assam. In West Bengal, an intensive campaign was organized from local, zonal and district levels to the state level during this period.

With steep rise in prices of essential commodities towards the end of 2006, the Party took up the campaign against price rise. The Central Committee gave a call for a one-week campaign from February 1 to 8, 2007, in which the issue of price rise was prominent in the charter of demands. The demands were: curb price rise, steps to be taken to provide relief to the farmers and the rural poor, strengthening the PDS, extension of the NREGA, introduction of women's reservation bill, legislation for agricultural workers and the unorganized sector workers. Apart from this, the Polit Bureau gave a call for a protest day against price rise to be observed countrywide on February 27, 2008. The demands were curbing of futures trading of food grains and essential commodities, revision of tax structure of petroleum products; adequate procurement of food grains at fair prices from farmers; strengthening of the PDS and price control on essential drugs. On this day, 25,000 people participated in the picketing in 219 centres in Tamilnadu, 1,200 persons courted arrest in five districts in Haryana, 3,000 people participated in the picketing programmes in Jharkhand in different centres of which 242 were arrested in three districts. In Gujarat around 700

Party workers courted arrest in five centres. In the Delhi demonstration on Parliament Street, four comrades were injured due to water cannon. In Tripura, 2.5 lakh people participated in the protest actions in 42 centres. In February 2007, the government stopped futures trading in rice and wheat.

The Party also actively opposed the successive price hikes of petroleum products. The 4th hike in petroleum prices took place in June 2005. At the call of the Party on June 28, there were protests organized all over the country including rail and rasta roko. The 5th hike in petroleum prices was announced in June 2006. The Left parties gave a call for protest action. On June 13, Left parties' leaders courted arrest in Delhi and there were widespread protests organized in all the states. The Left parties followed this up by giving a call for an anti-price rise week from July 13 to 19. This was however reduced after the first three days after the blasts in the trains in Mumbai in which a large number of people lost their lives. It is due to the consistent pressure and the protests mobilized by the Left parties that the government refrained from taking more steps to raise petroleum prices. It is under the pressure of the Left parties that the government reduced the petrol and diesel prices by Rs 4 and 2 respectively in two installments. However, in February 2008, the government after some delay announced a hike of Rs 2 and 1 for petrol and diesel per litre. The party gave a call for protests and there have been joint protests with the Left parties and some other parties like the Samajwadi Party. The position of the CPI(M) proposing alternative measures to fuel price hike, consisting of a revision of the taxation structure, doing away with the *ad valorem* duties and the setting up of a price stabilization fund out of the oil cess, has found wide acceptance. However, in view of the fact that price-rise is the one issue which affected people the most, a more concerted movement should have been conducted and more pressure built up on the government.

There were two general strikes by the working class in this period on September 29, 2005, and December 14, 2006. Both these general strikes took up the issues of privatization, disinvestment, review of electricity act, corporatisation of defence production units, public distribution system, comprehensive bill for agricultural workers, raising the interest of EPF, GPF, etc. Both the strike calls evoked a wide response among the different sections of the working class. The general strikes were also marked by solidarity actions by the peasant organisations, youth, students, etc.

III Against Communalism

The BJP was in disarray after its defeat in the Lok Sabha elections in 2004. This became manifest in the differences in the leadership. L.K. Advani was forced to step down as president of the party after the controversy regarding his remarks on Jinnah in Pakistan. This provided the opportunity for the RSS to strengthen its grip over the BJP. In the November 2006 BJP National Council meeting held in Lucknow, the BJP fell back on a full-scale Hindutva agenda. During the last three years, the BJP has been trying to regroup and mobilize by concentrating on issues based on its communal agenda. Alongside there was an increase in the attacks on the minorities and communal violence. The observance of the centenary celebrations of the RSS Chief Guru Golwalkar was the an occasion for a number of incidents of communal violence in the beginning of 2007 in Bangalore, in Gorakhpur and neighbouring districts of UP, and in Indore, Jabalpur, and Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh. Prior to

this communal violence erupted in Mangalore with the Hindu Sena and the Bajrang Dal resorting to a number of provocations. The RSS has been trying to stoke communal feelings by raising disputes at the Bhojshala in Dhar and the Baba Budhangiri shrine in Karnataka.

The Party has been engaged in countering the communal politics of the BJP-RSS combine and exposing their communal ideology. From the outset the Party has been demanding that the UPA government make serious efforts to see that justice is done to the Muslim community in Gujarat who were victims of the mass pogroms in 2002. In the review of the first year of the UPA government, the Party demanded that the serious cases of mass killings be handed over to the CBI. In the petitions before the Supreme Court in this regard, the Centre should take the stand that such cases should be given to the CBI. The Party opposed the demand to make *Vande Mataram* compulsory in schools, as demanded by the BJP. We said the matter should be left to the states to decide. We also opposed the BJP demand that Afzal Guru be executed immediately in the attack on parliament case. We said that the due legal and constitutional procedures have to be undertaken.

When the BJP circulated a rabidly communal CD against Muslims during the UP assembly elections, the Party lodged a complaint with the Election Commission and demanded punishment for this inflammatory campaign in the hearings conducted by the Commission.

The Party has strongly countered the communally motivated stand of the BJP that the Sachar Committee report is an instance of “minority appeasement.” It has been demanding that the UPA government take concrete steps to upgrade the socio-economic conditions of the minority community. The Party has been exposing the BJP’s false campaign on minority appeasement by citing the dismal socio-economic conditions of the minority community as revealed in the Sachar Committee report. The Party has been exposing the attacks on the minorities in the BJP-ruled states. An MPs’ delegation visited Kota in Rajasthan to enquire into the attacks on Christian minorities. CPI(M) MPs visited Mangalore after the communal violence to ascertain how the communal organisations fomented violence. Recently, after the attacks on the Christians in Khandamahal district in Orissa, the CPI(M) leader in the Rajya Sabha and Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury went to Orissa along with a delegation.

The Party has also demanded that the Central Government should reject the motivated campaign by the RSS-BJP combine on the so-called Ram Setu issue. A joint rally by the CPI(M) and the CPI was held in Tuticorin criticizing the Union Government for delaying the Sethusamudram project and demanding that it be executed without delay. The Party has taken a firm stand against the attacks by the Sangh combine on artists and intellectuals, as seen in the M.S. University campus in Vadodara.

The 18th Congress had pointed out that the BJP-RSS combine commands substantial support despite its defeat in the parliamentary elections. The political resolution had warned that “It will be a mistake to underestimate their latent strength.” In the recent period, the BJP has been able to win elections in three states where there were Congress state governments—Punjab, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh. It was also able to get reelected in Gujarat. In states where there are Congress governments and the BJP is the main opposition, it has been able to cash in on the popular discontent.

The all-sided struggle against communalism has to be carried out in the political, ideological and organisational spheres. It cannot be successfully undertaken in the way the Congress party deals with the matter. The 18th Party Congress had pointed out that the “fight against the communal forces is also conditioned by the vacillations and the lack of ideological firmness of the Congress. It seeks to rely on electoral tactics and manoeuvres to defeat the BJP.” This was seen in the way it fought the Gujarat assembly elections.

This underlines the necessity for the CPI(M) and the Left parties to consistently fight against all forms of communalism to defend the secular principle and to rally all other secular and democratic forces for this purpose.

IV

Foreign Policy and Anti-Imperialist Struggles

One of the major points of conflict with the UPA government emerged on foreign policy and strategic matters. The Party came out strongly against the Indo-US Defence Framework Agreement which was signed in June 2005 when the Defence Minister visited Washington. The Left parties held a public meeting in Delhi to highlight the dangerous provisions of the agreement. Meetings were held in Chennai and Bangalore addressed by the General Secretary on the same issue. Soon after, during the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to the United States in July 2005 a joint statement was issued with President Bush. This joint statement set out the contours of the strategic partnership with the US. The Party came out with a comprehensive statement against the joint statement and the emerging strategic alliance.

In September 2005, the UPA government decided to vote against Iran on the nuclear issue at the International Atomic Energy Agency. This was a volte face from its earlier position and was dictated by the need to conform to the US position. The Party reacted sharply to this turnaround and surrender to US pressure. A Committee for an Independent Foreign Policy was set up in Delhi consisting of the Left parties, the Samajwadi Party, the Janata Dal (S) and prominent personalities from different walks of life. Under its auspices a seminar was conducted on the Iran issue in which retired senior diplomats participated. A public meeting was also organized in October 2005. There was a big rally in Lucknow on November 13 by the Samajwadi Party and the Left parties. This was followed by conventions in Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chandigarh and meetings in Trivandrum and other centres in Kerala. Despite this opposition, the UPA government went ahead and voted a second time in February 2006 against Iran in the IAEA.

The Central Committee viewed the joint statement between the US President and the Indian Prime Minister with serious concern. It noted that this was a going back by the UPA government on its commitment to pursue an independent foreign policy in the CMP. Keeping this in mind, the Central Committee gave a call to observe an anti-imperialist day on January 24, 2006. This day was observed through conventions, public meetings and demonstrations all over the country. This campaign called for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq; an end to US targeting Iran, Syria and North

Korea; solidarity with the Palestinian struggle; and the demand that the UPA government pursue an independent foreign policy.

This campaign set the stage for the more widespread campaign organized on the occasion of the visit of President Bush to India in March 2006. Demonstrations and rallies were organized jointly by the Left parties. Both in Delhi and Hyderabad, cities Bush visited, there were big demonstrations. In Delhi, a big mobilization was undertaken by the Left parties, the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal (S).

The March 2006 meeting of the Central Committee took stock of this growing pro-US orientation and noted: “In the last nine months, one of the main issues between the UPA government and the Left that came to the fore is the Indo-US strategic alliance and India’s foreign policy. On the Iran nuclear issue, the government once again voted for reporting the matter to the Security Council on February 4, 2006. The whole situation will be changing with the new Indo-US equation and the strategic tie up. Our Party must understand the serious danger posed by this orientation of the UPA government. It will have serious repercussions for our economic sovereignty, independent foreign policy and lives of the working people.”

It is based on this understanding that the Party took up the fight against the Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreement. Among the other notable anti-imperialist activities of the Party were the call for a Palestine Solidarity Fund. An Asia-Pacific Cuba Solidarity conference was held in Chennai in June 2006. The preparations for this conference were mainly done by the Party in cooperation with other parties. A Nepal Democracy Solidarity Committee for the restoration of democracy was formed in August 2005. It consisted of nine parties. An all-party convention was also organized. In June 2006, a solidarity delegation visited Nepal led by Sitaram Yechury. The popular upsurge in Nepal led to a situation where all the democratic forces could unite. The UPA government which had been supportive of the movement for restoration of democracy, sought at the last stage to see if a compromise can be arrived at between the King and the Seven Party Alliance. The visit of Karan Singh as the Prime Minister’s envoy tried for such a compromise. Our Party came out against any such compromise. The Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists negotiated a 12 point agreement. A roadmap based on this agreement was worked out. The role played by our Party through the intervention of Sitaram Yechury facilitated the evolution of the roadmap which consisted of four points: (a) restoration of the dissolved parliament; (b) an interim government consisting of the seven party alliance; (c) decision by parliament to hold elections for a constituent assembly; and (d) official notification by the interim government for the Maoists to come for final negotiations.

The period under review has seen some of the biggest anti-imperialist mobilizations conducted by the Party and the Left forces. On September 1, 2006, 30 lakh people participated in a human chain in West Bengal organised by the Party and the Left Front. This was a mobilisation against imperialist wars and to protest against pro-US foreign policy stand of the UPA government. In 2007, from September 4 to 18, anti-imperialist rallies were held in Kerala in all the 140 assembly constituencies, the focus being against the nuclear deal and the strategic alliance with the US. 1.5 lakh people participated in these rallies. In West Bengal, between 8 to 14 November 2006, rallies were held in all districts against the death sentence to Saddam Hussain and in support

of the Palestinian people. When Saddam Hussain was hanged on December 30, there were protest demonstrations all over West Bengal, Kerala and in other states.

The Party decided to step up its opposition to the joint military exercises. In this context, when the Indo-US air joint exercises were announced to be held in Kalaikunda in West Bengal, the Party conducted a big mobilization against it. 1.5 million people rallied in all the districts across the state on November 7, 2006. Two lakh people participated in the protest near the air base.

The Party also took the initiative for the Left parties' jathas against the joint naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal held in September 2007. Four countries participated in the joint exercises with India—US, Japan, Australia and Singapore. This was part of the emerging quadrilateral security relations which the US is seeking to forge with India, Japan and Australia. Already the US has trilateral security cooperation with Japan and Australia. This would have been another step towards India getting entangled in America's strategic designs in Asia. The Left parties conducted two jathas from Kolkata to Vishakapatnam and from Chennai to Vishakapatnam from September 4 to 8. The Kolkata jatha was headed by A.B. Bardhan and the Chennai jatha by Prakash Karat. It culminated in a big rally at Vishakapatnam. Scores of meetings were organised enroute the two jathas in West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. Along with this, a joint campaign was conducted by the Left parties throughout the country from September 4 to 8 demanding an end to the joint military exercises and against the strategic alliance with the United States which is leading to policies which affects the people's livelihood, economic sovereignty and independent foreign policy. This campaign also explained our opposition to the Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreement. The Party continued its own independent campaign on these issues till the end of September.

V

Nuclear Deal

After the March 2006 Central Committee meeting the Party focused on the two aspects of the emerging strategic alliance with the United States. One was the military cooperation agreement and the other the nuclear deal. The Left parties raised a number of issues regarding the nuclear deal. The draft legislation brought before the US Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate revealed that there would be no full civilian nuclear cooperation as stated by the Prime Minister in Parliament. The Party raised nine points on the nuclear deal and demanded that the government clarify its position before proceeding. On August 17, 2006, the Prime Minister made a statement addressing all the nine points and give a categorical assurance that full civilian nuclear cooperation would be achieved and technology for the full nuclear cycle made available. He also gave an assurance regarding fuel supply guarantee and that India's independent foreign policy will not in any way be compromised.

However, in December 2006, the US Congress adopted the Hyde Act, which effectively nullified most of these assurances. The Party took the stand that the government should not proceed with the bilateral negotiations for the 123 agreement till the objectionable provisions of the Hyde Act are removed. However, the government went ahead with the negotiations and in July 2007, the 123 agreement was finalized. The cabinet gave its approval and only after that were the Left parties

briefed about the agreement. When the text was made available to the Left parties, a study showed that the Hyde Act provisions would continue to operate.

On August 7, 2007, the Left parties came out with their stand asking the government not to proceed further with the agreement. A Polit Bureau meeting was held on August 17–18. The Polit Bureau concluded that this agreement does not fulfill the aim of full civilian nuclear cooperation which was assured by the government. Further, it had adverse implications for an independent foreign policy and our security relations. The Polit Bureau adopted a resolution which stated as follows:

“Given the widespread opposition to the agreement and the fact that a majority in parliament do not support the nuclear cooperation deal, the government should not proceed further with the agreement.

Till all the objections are considered and the implications of the Hyde Act evaluated, the government should not take the next step with regard to negotiating a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

It is for the Congress leadership to decide on the matter which will have serious consequences for the Government and the country.”

The resolution of the Polit Bureau was conveyed to the Prime Minister and the Congress leadership. The Party leadership urged the government not to proceed further and find a way to look into all the objections to the deal. Given the seriousness of the issue, a Central Committee meeting was convened on August 23–24 to discuss the political crisis arising out of the nuclear deal. Since the government was insisting on proceeding with the deal, the Central Committee while endorsing the PB stand, also authorized the Polit Bureau to take whatever steps necessary to block the agreement. The Central Committee also decided to take the issue to the people through a mass campaign. Such a campaign would explain how, apart from the nuclear deal, the alliance with the US would lead to more anti-people economic policies which will affect the working people, agriculture and other spheres. The Party brought out a series of folders and booklets to explain the harmful features of the nuclear deal and the strategic alliance with the United States. In the talks with the Congress leadership we suggested that there should be a committee to go into the nuclear deal. But till the committee comes to its conclusions, the government should not proceed to the next stage of operationalising the agreement. Finally, due to the firm stand taken by the Party leadership, the Congress agreed to constitute a committee consisting of the UPA leaders and the Left leaders. The joint statement issued stated that: “The findings of the Committee will be taken into account before the operationalisation of the India-US Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.” The understanding being that the government will not proceed to the IAEA for talks while the Committee examines the deal.

The UPA-Left committee on the nuclear issue was constituted with Pranab Mukherjee as the convener. The UPA-Left committee has had six meetings. The Left parties submitted notes on the implications of the Hyde Act on the 123 agreement, on how foreign policy will be affected and on security matters. The government responded to

these notes. Altogether the Left submitted five notes and rejoinders and the government has also submitted a similar number.

The Party conducted a widespread campaign during the months of September and October through conventions and meetings. The Party independently and along with the Left parties conducted campaigns throughout the country. Despite the hostile propaganda from the mainstream media, public opinion was mobilized against the nuclear deal. Sections of the nuclear scientists and scientific intelligentsia also supported the Left stand. Till the beginning of October, the government persisted in its demand that it should be allowed to proceed to go to the IAEA and to operationalise the agreement. The only concession it made was that after the US Congress approved the 123 Agreement the Left would be consulted at the final stage before the Cabinet gave its approval. Since our Party made it clear that it would not allow the government to proceed to the next stage for operationalising the agreement at any cost, finally, the Congress leadership proposed that they be allowed to go to the IAEA for talks. They would not initial the agreement or seek the approval of the Board of Governors. The draft would be brought before the UPA-Left committee for its consideration. The government would not go ahead till the committee took into account the outcome of the IAEA talks also for its final conclusion. After this agreement was reached at the political level, this was announced through a statement by the joint committee on November 16, 2007.

The government has been holding discussions with the IAEA from November onwards. Till the end of February five rounds of talks have been held. It is only when the government brings the outcome of the talks to the committee that the Left will take the stand that they should not proceed further to finalise the safeguards agreement or go to the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The successful conduct of the struggle to block the nuclear deal should help the Party and the Left to rally other anti-imperialist forces to go forward with the struggle to prevent the strategic alliance with the United States.

VI Presidential & Vice Presidential Elections

The Polit Bureau worked out its approach to the Presidential elections scheduled to be held in May 2007. The role of the President under the Constitution is mostly a ceremonial one but it has assumed importance since coalition governments became the norm and the BJP gained sufficient strength to be able to make a bid for the government. From the 1992 Presidential elections, we have supported a Congress nominee like Shankar Dayal Sharma who would be firm on secularism. It was this stand that enabled Shankar Dayal Sharma to be succeeded by K.R. Narayanan who was then Vice President. Thanks to this approach for two successive terms though BJP became stronger, they could not influence the choice of President. The PB worked out the following stand for the Presidential candidate: (1) no renomination for Kalam; (2) the candidate should be of a political background and should have firm secular credentials; (3) we need not press a candidate from our side; and (4) we should ask the Congress party to select a candidate and given the Left's strength in the electoral college, we should be consulted on the choice. As for the Vice Presidential elections, we should take the initiative in choosing the candidate.

As for not putting up a candidate from our side, the Party's understanding was that the President represents the bourgeois-landlord State. Further, he or she has to articulate the government's positions and read out the address prepared by the government of the day. The President has to give assent to laws and legislations which we may be opposed to. In such a situation, it will not be correct for us to propose anyone from our Party for the post. After several rounds of consultations, the Congress party finally decided on putting up Pratibha Patil as a candidate. Her candidature found support among all the UPA partners. It was then decided that she would be the UPA nominee who would also be supported by the Left. When the BJP put up Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and started mobilizing support, the Party leadership decided that we should prevent non-NDA secular parties being mobilized by them.

The Party leadership kept in touch with the Samajwadi Party and the TDP leadership. We impressed upon them that while their not supporting the Congress candidate is understandable, they should not extend support to the BJP candidate. Subsequently, the UNPA decided to abstain from the election. However, Jayalalitha violated this decision and asked her legislators to support Shekhawat. The SP and the TDP abstained. The UPA won the election with a comfortable lead.

Following this, for the Vice Presidential election, the PB discussed the matter and came to the conclusion that we should put up a person of stature who is not necessarily from a political background. The Party decided that Hamid Ansari, a distinguished diplomat and Chairman of the National Minorities Commission would be a suitable candidate. The Left parties endorsed his nomination. The Congress leadership agreed to this choice. The NDA put up Najma Heptullah and the UNPA put up Rasheed Masood, a SP leader. The choice of Hamid Ansari who has a firm secular background and is known for his views in support of an independent foreign policy has been appreciated by wider circles. By adopting this approach for the President and Vice Presidential election, the Party was able to prevent the BJP trying to garner more support for its nominees.

VII

Election Tactics & Other Issues

For the Kerala assembly elections which were held in May 2006, the Polit Bureau intervened to work out the tactics for the elections. When the matter was put for discussion in the state committee, it proposed that there should be an understanding with the DIC in the elections without including it in the LDF. This would ensure a decisive defeat for the UDF. The Polit Bureau discussed the matter and decided that there should be no understanding with the DIC. Given the fact that Kerala is one of the three Left bases in the country, the strength of the Party and the LDF is of utmost importance. The split in the Congress had not taken place on any policy differences but was an outcome of a factional fight. Given the strong anti-UDF sentiments among the masses, we should not allow the DIC to gain from any joint understanding. It is therefore necessary to project the LDF with a clear-cut programme and not have any understanding with the DIC. The state committee accepted the PB's opinion.

In the Punjab assembly elections held in February 2007, the PB decided on the line to be adopted. The Punjab secretariat was of the opinion that there should be some seat adjustment with the Congress whereby some seats can be left for us without having an

alliance. The Polit Bureau decided that we should fight the elections along with CPI and some other similar parties. We should not go for a seat adjustment with the Congress. The main slogan would be to defeat the Akali Dal-BJP alliance and to oppose the record of the Congress government and its policies.

In Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, held in May 2007, the UP State Committee decided that our electoral line should be to give a call for defeating the BJP and the communal forces; given the record of the Mulayam Singh government the Party would not have an alliance or understanding with the Samajwadi Party, at the same time as suggested by the Polit Bureau the CPI(M) would not join any alliance or combination which targets the Samajwadi Party. The CPI(M) will contest in seats where it can put up an effective fight and support the candidates of the secular parties which can defeat the BJP. The Party would appeal to all the major secular forces to extend support to its candidates. As a result, the Party contested 11 seats. In four seats the Samajwadi Party extended support.

The Congress leadership was interested in removing the Mulayam Singh government in Uttar Pradesh. When the Supreme Court upheld the disqualification of 13 BSP MLAs who had defected to the Samajwadi Party, the Congress leadership decided to dismiss the Mulayam Singh government. This despite the fact that the Mulayam Singh government had proved its majority in the assembly in January 2007 excluding the disqualified MLAs. The Polit Bureau strongly opposed the move to invoke Article 356. Our firm stand prevented the Central Government from going ahead with the imposition of President's rule.

Note on the Reform of Election Commission

The West Bengal assembly elections in May 2006 were marked by extraordinary interventions by the Election Commission. The Commission worked on the premise that free and fair elections were not being held in the state. They therefore took such measures which were outside the jurisdiction of the Commission and constituted an encroachment on the powers of the state. An unprecedented five-phase polling was ordered. The posting exclusively of central paramilitary forces in the polling stations and prohibiting the use of state police for this work, violated the jurisdiction of the state on the question of law and order. The stringent prohibition on the use of campaign material restricted the right of political parties to campaign among the people. Observers of the Commission went to the extent of ordering arrests of voters and ordering raids on CPI(M) party offices. The Central Committee decided that the Party should prepare a comprehensive note documenting this experience and formulating steps to be taken to reform the work of the Commission.

The Party Centre prepared a note covering four important areas related to the institution of the Election Commission in the background of the experience of West Bengal assembly elections. The note was prepared to initiate a broader discussion and debate at the national level on the functioning of the Election Commission and its possible reforms. The four areas discussed in the note are: composition and modality for appointment and removal of members of Election Commission including Chief Election Commissioner; jurisdiction of the Election Commission; definition and role of election observers; and the law and order question and deployment of central forces. This note was circulated to other political parties for their consideration.

VIII

Left Parties

The coordination between the Left parties at the national level increased substantially during the last three years. The four Left parties meeting were held regularly averaging once a month. At certain periods the meetings were held with greater frequency. The necessity to adopt a common approach on UPA government's policies and to take a common stand in the UPA-Left Coordination Committee was the basis. By and large, the Left parties were able to formulate common positions on economic policies, foreign policy and on other political matters. The RSP had some reservation in supporting the Congress candidate for President but they went along with the decision. The Left parties were able to effectively take up foreign policy issues including the nuclear deal. Subsequently, on some policy matters, there were divergences. For instance on Special Economic Zones, though the Left parties submitted a note suggesting amendments in the Act and changes in the rules, later the RSP and the Forward Bloc stated that they were totally opposed to the SEZs being set up. The CPI has also been taking a position which demands changes in the law but also opposes SEZs. On price rise, on the joint naval exercises and other issues, the Left parties gave joint calls and conducted joint actions.

The differences and some strains on Left unity developed mainly on events in West Bengal. After the opposition conducted an agitation on the land acquisition for the Singur project and later when the violent opposition in Nandigram developed, the Forward Bloc, RSP and CPI began taking a different stand. The Forward Bloc and RSP began making public criticism of the government and the Party after the January 3, 2007 incidents in Nandigram. With the March 14 police action these differences became more acute. There are differences on issues of industrialization and how to go about it in West Bengal. The Forward Bloc announced it would fight the panchayat elections separately. After that, in the Tripura assembly elections, they broke with the Left Front and contested 12 seats on their own.

Our approach has been that the differences in the Left Front in Bengal should be discussed and settled there. On national issues we have continued to maintain our coordination. Throughout the period after the Nandigram incidents in March, the Left parties met at the national level for the Presidential election, Vice Presidential election, nuclear deal and for formulating the proposals for the forthcoming Union Budget. The stand of the RSP and Forward Bloc on a number of issues need to be countered politically and ideologically. After the Nandigram issue all over the country there was confusion and misgivings among Left-minded intellectuals and supporters.

The April 2007 meeting of the Central Committee decided to conduct a campaign to explain our stand on the question of industrialization, land use and how the interests of the peasantry will be protected by the CPI(M) and the Left Front government. Earlier, in February 2007, the Polit Bureau had discussed the issue of industrialization and land acquisition in West Bengal. The PB endorsed the stand taken by the Left Front government on the Tata car project in Singur. The PB refuted the charge that the land was forcibly acquired for the project. The PB was of the opinion that the Salim-related projects which involve large-scale land acquisition and displacement of people should be re-examined.

The Left Front government had taken the necessary steps to ensure a fair compensation package for those displaced from the land in Singur. The CPI(M) leadership of West Bengal had informed the PB that the SEZ proposals for Bengal would be finalised after the changes in the SEZ Act and Rules were brought about at the Central level. There was no question of any land being acquired for the chemical project in Nandigram against the wishes of the people. The PB concluded that the state government should apply the criteria for land conversion based on the land use policy adopted by the state government. Proper evaluation and pricing of land and rehabilitation for all those who are affected should be worked out. The PB, in this connection, raised the issue that the land acquisition act of 1894 has to be reviewed, so that the rights of the land holders and those dependent on land for their livelihoods are protected and adequate compensation and rehabilitation measures put in place.

The thirtieth anniversary of the Left Front Government of West Bengal was observed jointly by the Left parties. The occasion was utilized to hold meetings to highlight the achievements of the Left Front government and to explain the constraints in which it works. Meetings were held in all state capitals and other important centres. In many of these meetings leaders and ministers of the Left Front government participated.

IX

Third Alternative

In the 17th and 18th Congresses we had clarified the concept of a third alternative. This would be based on a common platform of policies that would emerge as a result of the Left, democratic and secular forces working together and through joint campaigns and struggles. The third alternative cannot be reduced to merely an electoral alliance. The third alternative has to be on the basis of programmes and policies distinct from that of the Congress and the BJP.

The Party has tried to bring some of the forces together on commonly agreed issues. In the period since the last Congress, the Party along with the Left parties joined hands with the Samajwadi Party and the JD(S) on foreign policy issues such as the vote against Iran in the IAEA. Joint meetings and rallies were organised. During the Bush visit too joint protest actions took place. On the nuclear deal also we were able to rally parties like the Samajwadi Party and the TDP. This reflected also inside parliament where the entire non-NDA secular parties joined with the Left parties.

The Samajwadi Party and the TDP took the initiative to form a third front which was named the United National Progressive Alliance. At the time of its formation it consisted of the SP, TDP, AGP, AIADMK and the INLD. The Central Committee decided that we cannot join the efforts for a third front with parties like the AIADMK. Further, the formation of a third front of this type comprising non-Congress, non-BJP parties would not be viable without having a clear-cut alternative set of policies. The Party therefore decided that while not subscribing to the idea of this front we should maintain relations with the Samajwadi Party, the TDP and the AGP. Our approach should be for a joint stand on issues and for joint action with these parties. During the presidential election we maintained our contacts with these parties and the AIADMK broke with the UNPA on the question of support to the BJP nominee, Shekhawat. Since then, we have had discussions with the leaders of the SP and the TDP and

impressed upon them the need to work jointly on issues of the people and evolve a common platform of policies. We should pursue these efforts. We should maintain our relations with the parties in the UPA like the DMK and the RJD. By raising common issues and initiating joint campaigns and struggles the way can be paved for the building of a third alternative.

X

Taking up Social Issues

The 18th Congress had called on the Party to take the lead in taking up social issues for campaigns and struggles. The need to identify with the aspirations and assertions of all socially and economically oppressed sections was stressed. Specifically the resolution had mentioned:

- The cause of the dalits against caste oppression, making their demand for social justice a part of the common democratic platform;
- The rising consciousness and movement of women for equality and gender justice viewing the women's question as not only a gender issue but a class issue;
- The struggle of the adivasis-tribal people for land, access to forests, an end to the inhuman capitalist and feudal exploitation, and protecting their identity, cultural and linguistic rights; and
- All social causes which help fight obscurantism, socially regressive customs and patriarchal and feudal practices.

The record in these three years has been mixed. Serious efforts were made on the issues concerning tribals and minority sections. However on the issues concerning dalits and gender issues much more requires to be done by the State committees. The formation and work of the two committees on dalits and minorities after the 18th Congress apart from the tribal sub-committee has certainly helped to frame party policies and approaches and to take forward the work among these sections. However except for some sporadic attempts we have been unable to take up any issues of social reform in a sustained manner. Practices like dowry continue without organised opposition from us even in the States where we are strong and where we have traditions of leading such social reform movements. In the coming days we must make every effort to take up such issues so as to make a difference to people's lives.

Taking up Dalit Issues

The Party centre organised an all-India convention on dalits in New Delhi on February 12, 2006. This was the first time that the Party had organised a convention on dalit issues at the national level. 600 delegates representing 21 states attended the convention. The convention adopted a 15-point charter of demands which include implementation of land reforms, strict implementation of reservations in appointment and promotions, passing a legislation to provide reservation in the private sector, infrastructure development, rooting out untouchability, protection from atrocities, providing more employment opportunities, providing educational facilities, passing a comprehensive legislation providing minimum wages and other social security measures, expansion of credit facilities, strengthening of the PDS, abolition of bonded labour and rehabilitation of bonded labourers, etc.

Another convention was organised by the Centre on August 21, 2007 for taking up the issue of grant of scheduled caste status to Bengali refugees rehabilitated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. A meeting of the state secretaries of the concerned states was also held and chalked out programmes to take up their demands. There is a good possibility of drawing in the namashudra sections into our movements in these States. In Uttarakhand a good initiative was taken on the issue of land rights of namashudras who had lost their land to moneylenders. A sustained intervention by the Party has made a good impact in the area.

Dalit conventions were held in the states of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Karnataka, Maharashtra, UP, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana and Orissa. A cycle jatha led by Polit Bureau member, B.V. Raghavulu was organised in Andhra Pradesh in April 2006. This programme helped to rouse the consciousness of the dalits and other sections of the people against the practice of social discrimination. In Tamilnadu, the Party took up the case of the Arundathiyar community, the most downtrodden among the dalits. A convention was held followed by a big demonstration in Chennai on their demands. A untouchability eradication front was formed in the state. After the terrible Khairlanji atrocity in Maharashtra a delegation led by Polit Bureau member Brinda Karat had visited the area and made the demand for CBI inquiry which was accepted by the government. The Party has intervened in several such cases of violence against dalits. In Maharashtra a statewide call for protests was given in cases of atrocities against dalits. However a review by the dalit committee has noted that in the Hindi speaking states much more organised work among these sections needs to be done. It is indeed a matter of concern that the need to take up issues of social oppression of dalits apart from the economic issues is not yet taken seriously by many party committees in these states. An exception has been Haryana, where the committee has consistently taken up violence against dalits in the so-called "honour" killings. The work among dalits must be taken up as an important task in the coming days. Our efforts should be concentrated on certain sections and areas. Mass organisations also should be geared up to take up the issues of dalits in all spheres. In particular our comrades working in trade unions should also take up the issues of dalits from common platforms.

Work among Women

Implementing the directive of the 18th Party Congress the Central Committee adopted a document 'On Party's Perspective on Women's Issues and Tasks' in December 2005. This is the first document of its kind in the Party. The document set out eight tasks for immediate implementation. The document has been reported in most of the State committees. State Committees should prepare a document on the situation in each State and chalk out concrete tasks for implementation.

As far as taking up gender issues directly by the Party the Central Committee had included the demand for Women's Reservation Bill in its national campaigns. A separate national call was also given on this demand in 2006. Most of the States had implemented this call. However a wrong understanding that the issue concerns only women was reflected in the approach of some committees which asked the women's organisation to hold the dharna. The Tamilnadu State Committee had taken a good

initiative to hold a large convention against female foeticide in 2007 after a campaign which got a good public response. The Party has also taken up the issue of anganwadi workers in different programmes. It has been seen in this period that women's mobilisations in Party programmes has increased significantly in most States. To further this positive trend it is necessary for Party committees to seriously take up issues like dowry, female foeticide, violence against women, etc.

A national workshop was held on our approach to self-help groups. Since 95 per cent of such groups are women, the party's approach has a direct effect on increasing our work among women. The Party must implement the tasks set out in the approach paper so as to be able to directly help the lakhs of women in the self-help groups.

Taking up Tribal Issues

The Party made serious efforts to take up tribal issues. The Party observed November 18, 2005, as All India Tribal Demands Day. This was the first time that the Party gave a call at the all-India level on tribal issues. Rallies were organised in Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Tripura, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Kerala. A sustained campaign was held to ensure passage of the Tribal Forest Rights Bill through a series of programmes in the different States. The details were discussed in an extended meeting of the tribal sub-committee which chalked out the Party's approach to the Bill. The intervention of the Party on the Bill certainly created goodwill for the Party and gave us an opportunity to approach new sections of tribals.

In this period there have been struggles against tribal evictions in States like Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra, where the Party's interventions have been able to bring some relief to tribals. In Tripura the initiatives of the Party for advance of tribal rights have had a big impact as can be seen in the large number of tribal families who have left other parties and have joined the movement led by us. The tribal rally in Tripura before the elections was unprecedented.

Work among Minorities

The Party's work among Muslim minorities has increased. The Party's consistent stand against communalism, against US imperialist aggression, and in support of the Sachar Committee recommendations have had a positive impact among minority communities. Seeing this, Muslim fundamentalist organisations have also stepped up their attack on us. In the coming days while defending the rights of minority communities it is necessary to strongly counter the false propaganda of the fundamentalists against us.

The Party organised a national convention on March 30, 2007, in New Delhi for implementation of the recommendations of the Sachar Committee. The convention adopted a charter of demands and decided to hold state-level conventions to popularise the demands. It was also decided that the participation should not be confined to people belonging to the minority communities alone. On this basis conventions were held in 13 states.

Part II

On Left-Led Governments: The Experience and their Role in the Present Situation

1. The Left-led governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura are an important part of the Left and democratic movement in the country. These governments are products of prolonged political struggles and movements in these three states. The Left Front in West Bengal emerged after seven years of semi-fascist terror directed against the Party. In Tripura, after the manipulated elections of 1988, the Party experienced a five-year period of semi-fascist terror. In Kerala, there has been periodic repression and attacks. All these governments have faced hostile and discriminatory attitudes from the Centre and the ruling party/alliance during various periods of time.

2. However, since the Party correctly implemented the understanding contained in the Party programme about our participation in and running state governments, we were able to beat back the various attacks and hostile manoeuvres and gained more and more support for the Left Front and the Left-led alliance which were translated into popular mandates for forming Left-led governments. The Party has gained rich experience of working in state governments within a parliamentary democratic system in which real State power resides at the Centre. When the Communist Party won a majority in the assembly elections in Kerala in 1957 for the first time and formed a government, we were confronted with a situation where an uncharted path faced us. The first Communist ministry took pioneering steps for land reforms; enhancing the minimum wages and initiating welfare measures for the working people; democratising the educational system; a pro-people police policy and decentralisation of powers. These measures attracted the ire of the ruling classes who organised an anti-communist so-called “liberation struggle” leading to the dismissal of the government under Article 356 of the Constitution. This experience of running the government for 28 months helped the CPI(M) to later formulate the tactical direction in the Party programme.

3. First, it is necessary to place the Party’s role in state governments within the framework set out in the Party programme. How does it fit in with the strategy for People’s Democratic Revolution and the tactical line of building a Left and democratic alternative? The Party programme sets out the goal of People’s Democracy to replace the existing bourgeois-landlord system. To proceed towards this aim it is necessary to build a People’s Democratic Front of the working class, the peasantry and other allies at the all-India level through the development of a powerful movement. As an interim step towards developing the People’s Democratic Front, the Party has put forward the slogan of a Left and democratic alternative. In the process of this struggle to build the Left and Democratic Front at the all India level, it is possible that the Party and the Left and democratic forces will become strong in some states to acquire a majority in the legislature. In such a situation, the Party programme sanctions the participation of the Party in such governments while keeping in mind that the states have very limited powers and it is the Centre which controls State power and its instruments. The understanding of the Party on our participation in

governments was contained in Para 112 of the Party programme which was adopted in 1964.

4. This paragraph stated as follows:

“The Party will obviously have to work out various interim slogans in order to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing political situation. Even while keeping before the people the task of dislodging the present ruling classes and establishing a new democratic state and government based on the firm alliance of the working class and peasantry, the Party will utilise all the opportunities that present themselves of bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people. The formation of such governments will give great fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working people and thus help the process of building the democratic front. It, however, would not solve the economic and political problems of the nation in any fundamental manner. The party, therefore, will continue to educate the mass of the people on the need for replacing the present bourgeois-landlord state and government headed by the big bourgeoisie even while utilising all opportunities for forming such governments of a transitional character which give immediate relief to the people and thus strengthen the mass movement.”

5. This formulation clarifies that while working for the strategic goal of dislodging the present ruling classes and establishing a new People’s Democratic State and government, interim slogans and tactics have to be worked out. This may require “bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people.” The formation of governments can provide a fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working people if they give relief to the people and strengthen the mass movements. At the same time there should be no illusion that they can solve the basic economic and political problems of the country in a fundamental manner. The formation of governments with CPI(M) participation should therefore help to develop the Left and democratic movement.

6. The provision in the Programme makes it clear that a state government run by the Party cannot fulfill the strategic goals. What the state governments can do is to advance the political-tactical line of the Party and, in the context of our programmatic understanding, work to strengthen the Left and democratic forces, so that a Left and democratic alternative emerges in the country.

7. In 1967, the Party was called upon to give concrete shape to this tactical direction given in the Party programme. In the 1967 general elections, the Congress lost its monopoly of power when it was defeated in nine states. This came in the background of mounting economic difficulties leading to popular discontent and widespread struggles. Non-Congress governments were formed in nine states. The Central Committee adopted a resolution “New Situation and Tasks” in April 1967 which elaborated the understanding of the Party regarding the United Front governments in which we were participating. The resolution characterized the various non-Congress state governments. The Party had decided to join the United Front governments in Kerala and West Bengal where the Left and democratic forces were in a strong position. Unlike the CPI, the Party refused to join state governments in Bihar,

UP and Punjab where the Left and democratic forces did not have a decisive say. The resolution first spelt out the character of the state governments and their limitations. It stated: "A good and essential part of state power resides in the Union Centre and the Congress Central Government and whatever small share of power the state governments possess, under the provisions of the country's Constitution, will have to be exercised within the confines of this overall central power."

8. The resolution explained the way the ministry should function keeping in mind the direction given in Para 112.

"Finally, there is one point to be constantly borne in mind by our comrades working in the UF Cabinet. We cannot forecast the actual lifespan of these Governments and all the possible vicissitudes they will have to undergo during the tenure of their ministries. We cannot also definitely say how much relief can be given to the people and what actual possibilities are opened up for these Governments to do so. Our ministries, without either entertaining undue illusions about giving relief in a big way, or courting despair that nothing can be done under the present set-up, should always bear in mind that they as the Party's representatives, should strive to tender our bona fides to the people. Any failure on this score compromises the Party's political line in the eyes of the people; adversely affects the independent mobilisation of the people; and their activities, and all this in turn, will not help us to resist and overcome the vacillations, wobblings and sometimes even possible backsliding of some democratic parties in the UFs and their respective Governments. In a word, the UF governments that we have now are to be treated and understood as instruments of struggle in the hands of our people, more than as Governments that actually possess adequate power, that can materially and substantially give relief to the people. In clear class terms, our Party's participation in such Governments is one specific form of struggle to win more and more people, and more and more allies for the cause of People's Democracy and at a later stage for Socialism."

9. The 1967-70 period of UF governments threw up a rich and varied experience for the Party on united front tactics and also on how to participate in and run governments. The Party's firm stand against the Central government's policies, seeing the formation of the Left-led governments as part of the class struggle and the steady expansion of its mass base alarmed the anti-Marxist forces and some of the partners of the United Front including the CPI. The Party's correct united front tactics and its creative approach to the state governments helped the Party to overcome the odds, though we paid a heavy price. For nearly a decade over two thousand of our cadres were killed in West Bengal and Kerala by the goons of the ruling class parties. This happened in a situation where Left unity was disrupted and the state machinery was utilized to repress the Party. But this period helped the Party establish the leadership role of the Party among the Left and democratic forces in West Bengal and Kerala.

10. Finally, after the Emergency in 1977, we were able to reforge Left unity (the CPI joined in 1980) and there was the experience of the correctness of our political line and united front tactics. The first Left Front government was formed in West Bengal in 1977 and we have been in government for the last 30 years, having won seven successive elections. In Tripura, the first Left Front government was formed

after the elections in 1978 and the second Left Front government in 1983. After ten years of Left Front rule, the assembly elections of 1988 were violently rigged with the help of the Central government. After five years of terror, the Left Front government was re-elected in 1993 and it has now been reelected for the fourth successive term in March 2008. In Kerala, there have been alternate stints in office for the Left and Democratic Front which was formed in 1980. These were in 1980–82, 1987–1991, 1996–2001 and the LDF was again elected to office in the 2006 assembly elections.

11. From 1967 onwards the CPI(M)-led governments have taken the lead in implementing land reform laws. It is only these three states which have seriously undertaken land reforms within the existing constitutional limits. In all three states substantial steps were taken for vitalizing the panchayat system and decentralisation of powers. Left-led governments refused to let police be used against democratic movements and the struggles of the working class, peasantry and other democratic sections. These governments have stood out because of their firm stand against the communal forces, by preventing communal riots or by effectively tackling them if they did break out. The Left-led governments took significant steps to increase social welfare measures to expand the public educational and health systems and to strengthen the public distribution system. Under the Left-led governments, the democratic rights of different sections of people have been assured. In contrast to governments run by bourgeois parties, the Left-led ministries have a record of being free from corruption. It is on this basis that the direction given in the programme that they should give a “fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working people” and “strengthen the mass movement” have been by and large fulfilled. Both the Party and the mass movements in the three states have grown steadily. The existence of the Left-led governments and their work have contributed to this. It may be recalled that in 1977 the Party membership in West Bengal was 33,720 and the total membership of the mass organisations 25 lakh. After 30 years of Left Front rule, the Party membership today stands at 3,21,682 and mass organisation membership at 3,43,24,754. In Kerala the Party membership in 1978 was 67,366 and the mass organisation membership 10,09,176. Today the Party membership is 3,36,644 and mass organisation membership 1,42,52,725. In Tripura in 1978 the Party membership was 3,970 and the mass organisation membership was 1,07,822. Today the Party membership is 67,764 and mass organisation membership is 19,52,485.

12. The Left-led governments’ stand on ethnic and nationality issues has also been distinct from other state governments. The Left-led governments have protected the rights of the linguistic and ethnic minorities. In Tripura, the Left Front government struggled to set up the Tribal Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. This was part of the overall approach of strengthening tribal-non-tribal unity while looking after the special interests of the tribal people. In Darjeeling, as against the separatist demand, the Left Front government set up the Darjeeling Gorkhaland Hills Council. It is now striving to include this in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Left-led governments have created an atmosphere where chauvinism, linguistic or regional, is not tolerated.

13. State power in India is expressed through the Constitution and the parliamentary system. The various instruments of State power like the higher judiciary and the civil services are not exercised by the state governments. While the legislature has limited powers in certain spheres, even these are circumscribed by the

necessity to get assent from the central power. The judiciary in general has been hostile to the progressive measures adopted by the Left-led governments. Beginning with the striking down of vital clauses of the Agrarian Reforms Act passed by the first communist ministry to the latest interventions by the Kolkata High Court on the Nandigram events, the Left-led governments have had to contend with a conservative and status quoist judiciary. The Left-led governments have had to constantly face hostility and the partisan use of constitutional and legal provisions. These include partisan acts by Governors, use of the unbridled powers in Article 356 to dismiss governments, and discrimination by the Centre in allocation of resources. The Centre on various occasions has not hesitated to take steps such as cutting rice allocations for Kerala or licenses for industries in West Bengal as a weapon against Left-led governments. The Party and the Left-led governments had to consistently mobilize the people against the conspiracies and hostile measures against the Left-led governments.

14. While running state governments as set out in the programme, we have consistently campaigned and mobilized the people in movements to explain the class character and attitude of the Central government and make people conscious of the limitations of the state government in the present set up. One of the consistent themes of the Left-led governments has been the fight against the Central government's discriminatory attitude to the Left-run state governments. Connected to this was the struggle for more rights for the states and to restructure centre-state relations. Finally, the state governments headed by us have striven to implement the tactical line and formulate policies which can mobilize the people as distinct from the policies of other bourgeois-run state governments.

15. To sum up, it can be said that the Party's approach to state governments set out in Para 112 of the Party programme has been fruitful and it has increased the Party's mass base wherever we have had the opportunity of playing a leading role in the state governments.

16. The role of the CPI(M)-led state governments cannot be seen in isolation from the overall political situation in the country and the tactical line adopted by the Party. When the united front government was formed in 1967, three years after the adoption of the Party programme, the understanding about the international and national situation was as follows: (i) Internationally, socialism was considered the decisive force in shaping the correlation of forces. (ii) The national liberation movements were emerging victorious against imperialism. (iii) In the national situation, the economic crisis was seen to be developing into a political crisis. (iv) The formation of the UF governments were seen to be part of the rising tide of democratic forces. (v) Call was given for a national democratic alternative to Congress rule. In such a situation the CC directed that we should strive to make these Left-led governments instruments of struggle.

17. After the end of the Emergency and the 1977 elections a new situation emerged. This was assessed in the 10th Congress and a tactical line evolved. It was no more relevant to view the Left-led governments solely as instruments of struggle. It had to incorporate the aspect of running the government to meet the aspirations of the people, their developmental needs and mobilising them for alternative policies. This became all the more important in the context of the all-India movement and the Left

not being able to develop substantially in other parts of the country. The people of the three Left bastions cannot be told to wait indefinitely for their problems to be addressed till a change takes place at the all-India level. Since the emergence of a Left and democratic alternative was going to be a protracted affair, the governance, administration and development issues which affected the lives of people cannot be relegated to a secondary factor. How to fulfill the commitments to the people and provide a government which is distinct from that of the bourgeois parties came to the fore.

18. In West Bengal, even before liberalisation, the issue of how to go about industrialisation came up. The issue of Haldia petro-chemical project being set-up in the joint sector came up in 1984–85. The state government decided to go in for a joint venture with the private sector. Questions were raised whether this was permissible. At the 12th Congress of the Party in December 1985, the matter was discussed. B.T. Ranadive summed up the discussions by stating that West Bengal under Left Front rule has been facing an “economic blockade” from the Centre. West Bengal was discriminated against on a class basis because it is run by a Left-led government. It is in the class interests of the working class to break this blockade. Industrialisation is necessary for West Bengal to generate employment. Within the existing capitalist system and the parameters set out by the big bourgeois-led government at the Centre, it was not possible to develop industries in West Bengal with the limited resources of the state government. Neither was it possible to change the nature of the capitalist path of development in one state alone when all the powers are vested with the Centre. West Bengal government cannot by itself break from this bourgeois landlord system. So the petro-chemical project with private sector participation is a tactical necessity. The Haldia project was the first major industrial venture initiated by the state government after it assumed office in 1977.

19. The political situation changed by the end of the eighties. Internationally, the correlation of class forces changed after the setbacks to the socialist system. Throughout the 1990s there was a shift to the right with the rise of the BJP first as the major opposition party and later with its six years in office. The defence of secularism and isolation of communal forces also became a priority for the Left-led state governments. The second important change was the liberalisation and privatisation process which was initiated in 1991. The political resolutions of the Party Congresses from 1992 onwards pointed out that these economic policies are not just the policies of the Congress(I) but of the Indian ruling classes. There was no major difference between the economic policies of the Congress and the BJP.

20. The deregulation of the economy and delicensing of industries by the Centre; the curtailing of the public sector, and withdrawal of the State from certain spheres of the economy and the privatisation drive all brought about a sea change. With the cutbacks in public investment and the withdrawal of the state from its social responsibilities, the state governments were squeezed of resources even in the social sector. It became increasingly difficult for the state governments to maintain public services and raise resources for education, health, public transport and welfare measures. There was a change also in centre-state relations. The encroachment and conditionalities on the states came in new forms. The terms of reference of the Finance Commission for central grants and resource transfers, loans for sectoral

development and Central government programmes like the JNNURM had conditionalities attached to push through neo-liberal reforms.

21. Earlier the Left-led governments were consistently struggling against the discrimination by Central government in terms of licensing, investments and provision of financial resources to the Left-led states. With deregulation and a market economy, this aspect receded and the question of how to attract investments for industry and infrastructure development came to the fore. The West Bengal government brought out an industrial policy in 1994. Since this raised various questions, the Central Committee adopted a resolution in 1994, “**On the Role of the West Bengal Left Front Government in the Context of the New Economic Policies**”. This was the first document adopted by the Party to reappraise how the Left Front government can chalk out a path of development and formulate policies in a new situation.

22. The resolution stated: “The existence of the Left Front government over a long period in a stable manner after winning successive elections also posed the question of how this government must address the issue of economic and industrial development. While projecting alternative policies and mobilizing the people for the same, the Left Front government is also responsible to the people to provide them with the minimum needs with regard to their livelihood and standards of living. It has to deliver results as compared to other state governments working within the capitalist system. It cannot ignore the questions of development. But when we pursue policies for development/industrialization, the priorities set out by a Left-led government for serving the interests of the working people and the poorest sections must be evident in our implementation, whatever be the constraints. That shows the difference between governments run by us and other bourgeois party governments.”

23. Taking stock of the new situation, the resolution stated: “Unlike in 1985, when the struggle was against the discrimination of the Centre, with its power of licensing and regulation of industry against West Bengal today with deregulation and delicensing it is up to the Left Front Government to initiate steps to attract capital investment in West Bengal. This can be done only by allowing greater investment of private capital in various sectors. This is the basis on which the Left Front government has to adjust its policies in West Bengal to meet the new situation brought about by the Centre’s policy of liberalisation. While doing so, the CPI(M)-led government has to be conscious of not adopting any such terms or implementation which are only due to the unjustified pressure of foreign capital or big business. It should not go against available indigenous technology or lead to diversion of limited capital resources to inessential sectors. . . . While orienting the policies and regulations in the state to facilitate greater private investment, the people should constantly be told that such industrialization and expansion of the private sector cannot solve the basic problems and class exploitation will continue and increase with the overall liberalisation policy of the Centre.”

24. The Party programme was updated in 2000. While updating the programme, the experience of running the state governments both in the pre-liberalisation phase and the post-liberalisation phase was taken into account. The Left-led governments formed after the 1964 programme was adopted could not serve their full term and had short tenures. Both the UF governments in West Bengal of 1967 and 1969 had a

combined tenure of less than two years. The Kerala UF government lasted a little over two years. The emphasis of such governments was to utilize the government to bring some immediate measures which can help unleash the mass movements and strengthen the Party's base like land reform measures and provide some immediate relief to the people as stated in Para 112. That situation changed. After the experience of the Left Front government in West Bengal for more than two decades and the full terms of such governments in Tripura and Kerala it was not sufficient to talk in terms of carrying out a "modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people." While the Left-led governments were successful in mobilizing more and more people around the platforms of the Left and democratic forces, the people expected these governments to also provide development and raise their living standards. Therefore, creating employment, public education and health facilities, provision of basic services had to be on the agenda of the state governments. While the Central government and the ruling classes push for the uncritical extension of the policies of liberalization and privatisation, the Left-led governments had to take into account the existing realities and limitations of the state government and work out policies and measures for economic and social development which provide better standards of living. This had to be done in a manner which showed that the Left-led governments have a pro-people approach and also strive to put in place some alternative policies which are part of the Left and democratic platform.

25. The updated programme had a revised formulation on state governments as para 7.17 which reads as follows:

"The Party will obviously have to work out various interim slogans in order to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing political situation. Even while keeping before the people the task of dislodging the present ruling classes and establishing a new democratic State and government based on the firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry, the Party will utilise the opportunities that present themselves of bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a *programme of providing relief to the people and strive to project and implement alternative policies within the existing limitations*. The formation of such governments will strengthen the revolutionary movement of the working people and thus help the process of building the people's democratic front. It, however, would not solve the economic and political problems of the nation in any fundamental manner. The Party, therefore, will continue to educate the mass of the people on the need for replacing the present bourgeois-landlord State and government headed by the big bourgeoisie even while utilising opportunities *for forming such governments in the states or the Centre, depending on the concrete situation*, and thus strengthen the mass movement."

26. Instead of the governments aiming to carry out a "modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people," the updated programme provides for "governments pledged to carry out a programme of providing relief to the people and strive to project and implement alternative policies within the existing limitations." The governments cannot confine themselves to only providing immediate relief but something more substantial. They should also strive to implement within the existing limitations certain alternative policies. In fact even the implementation of land

reforms is not just providing “immediate relief” but is part of the alternative platform of the Left and democratic forces.

27. It is flowing from this understanding that the Party has been addressing issues and policy matters arising out of our running the three state governments. The 18th Party Congress adopted as part of the Political Organisational Report a document on “**Certain Policy Issues**”. Some of the policy issues had a direct relevance to the Left-led state governments such as (i) taking loans and grants from foreign and multilateral agencies; (ii) approach to public sector; and (iii) foreign direct investment in the Left-led states. It was based on the programmatic formulation and certain policy issues that have come up in West Bengal and Kerala in the recent period. Based on the guidelines provided in the document “**Certain Policy Issues,**” in the last three years, we have been tackling issues concerning FDI, the public sector and foreign loans in the states where we are in government. In Kerala, the Polit Bureau gave its opinion on the ADB loan to be taken for urban infrastructure in the five city corporations. This was an issue on which there were differences within the state committee. Regarding the Smart City project, where FDI was involved, the LDF government was able to work out the terms for renegotiation which were more favourable than the one signed by the previous UDF government. This was based on the discussion of the terms in the state secretariat. The PB also gave its opinion on some aspects. Regarding taking up a World Bank loan the secretariat referred the matter to the PB. The PB has given its opinion that the loan may be taken provided there are no such conditionalities which are objectionable as stated in the policy document. Earlier, in West Bengal, the DFID pilot project for rehabilitation and compensation for restructured state PSUs was discussed and approved by the Polit Bureau after referring it to expert opinion. The Polit Bureau asked the West Bengal secretariat to examine some of the Salim-related projects with regard to land acquisition requirements and the real estate development aspects.

28. The entire Party has to understand the role played by the CPI(M)-led governments and the constraints they face. Failure to do so leads to exaggerated expectations. In a situation where the three states are advanced outposts and where the Party and the Left have been unable to advance forward building the Left and Democratic Front, it is unrealistic to expect the Left-led governments to initiate any basic changes. With the neo-liberal framework and the liberalization offensive our governments have been defensively responding to protect whatever gains we have made and to bring about some development and provide relief to the people. While running state governments, the policies and steps taken must be viewed in the light of the all-India tactical line and policies that we advocate.

29. While at the all India level the Party puts out alternative policies and seeks to mobilize people in their sphere, it does not follow that all these alternative policies can be put into operation in the three states where we run state governments. In fact the movements in the three states have made a big contribution towards the all India movement which fights for these alternative policies. In the struggles launched against economic policies of the Centre, the Left-led states are the mainstay and have made the biggest contribution. This must be kept in mind when we are projecting alternative policies.

30. In the recent period, the UPA government's push for Special Economic Zones has been controversial and has met with widespread opposition. Our Party stand in this matter has been set out in great detail in the note submitted to the UPA-Left Coordination Committee and in the Political Resolution of the 19th Congress. We are in the struggle to get the concept and the rules of the SEZ changed. So far only some minor changes have been accepted by the UPA government. This is a policy which is already being implemented and the bulk of the SEZs sanctioned so far have been in five states. But while opposing the SEZ Act and rules, we cannot expect the Left-led states not to have SEZs. Some SEZs have already been sanctioned in West Bengal. The Smart City project will also have a SEZ status. We can limit the size of the land to be given and insist on land use in such a manner where it cannot be used for real estate purposes and speculation. But the tax concessions are in the hands of the Central government. It is for these tax sops that IT companies and others are setting up SEZs. It will not be possible for the Left-led states to prohibit SEZs till the time basic changes can be accomplished at the all India level. The West Bengal conference document states the following:

31. "There is debate regarding the setting up of SEZs. We have opposed the unbridled proliferation of SEZs across the country resulting from the en masse approvals granted by the Central government. The Party has categorically conveyed its opposition to the current SEZ policy to the Central government, with regard to the total number of SEZs, minimum and maximum area under SEZs, land-use within SEZs and the exorbitant tax concessions that have been granted. However, no change in the Central policy has occurred so far. In this backdrop, if we are not able to set up SEZs in our State, not only would we lose out in the cut-throat competition to attract investments in export-oriented industries, but also suffer in terms of the eventual sickness and closure of the existing export-oriented industries in the State. This cannot be allowed to happen. Therefore, within the compulsions arising out of the present situation, we have to set up some sector-specific SEZs that will not require much land, and some multi-product SEZs keeping in mind the need for balanced development in the State. However, at least 50% of the land must be used for industrial purposes in those SEZs." When SEZs are set up where we have Left-led governments, we should ensure that there is no restriction on trade unions and the rights of the working class to organise.

32. In West Bengal, from the 20th state conference of the Party in 2002, there has been an emphasis on thrust given for industrialisation and the need to increase investment in industries in order to generate employment. This drive for industrialization is now being contested and criticized by some of the parties in the Left Front like RSP and Forward Bloc. In the light of the Singur and Nandigram episodes, there is also a charge that land is being taken from the peasantry to be handed over to the capitalists. There are some critics who oppose industrialisation stating that it is against the interests of the peasantry. Fears are raised that the gains of the land reforms will be undermined. The issue is not industries versus agriculture. After three decades of development of agriculture based on land reforms and the three-tier panchayat system, it is necessary to develop industry on the basis of this agricultural growth. Industrialisation is necessary for the balanced growth of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors which will be in the interests of the peasantry and agriculture in West Bengal. West Bengal has an agriculture based on small peasant ownership of land. Small and marginal households have ownership holdings

which cover 84 per cent of the area owned. They account for 97.8 per cent of the households. West Bengal has had an agricultural growth of 3.2 per cent when the entire country has been undergoing an agrarian crisis. West Bengal is the highest producer of rice and vegetables in the country.

33. At the same time the small peasant-based agricultural economy is subject to increasing capitalist exploitation along with the remnants of pre-capitalist relations. The agrarian crisis is having an adverse impact on the peasantry, though there are no suicides of farmers, as in some other states. Since there is constant fragmentation and division of land holdings and a high proportion of rural population dependent on agriculture along with a high proportion of landlessness, it is essential that this population dependent on agriculture finds avenues for employment which will be mainly provided by industrial development. West Bengal has a significant share of small and tiny enterprises in the country. According to the latest data, the number of unorganized small manufacturing units in the state is 27,50,000 which is the highest in the country and accounts for over 15 per cent of the total number of such units nationwide. Many of these enterprises cannot sustain and become sick or close down. It is necessary for the state to develop large and medium manufacturing enterprises. Due to the thrust given by the government West Bengal has begun to attract large-scale investment for various industries. According to one report the state has received proposals worth Rs 2,13,882 crores between January and November 2007. New industries are increasing the demand for land and infrastructure.

34. On the demand for land for industry and infrastructure the recent West Bengal state conference in its resolution **“Left Front Government, Panchayats, Municipalities & Our Tasks”** has stated:

“New proposals for establishing large industries have naturally increased the demand for land and infrastructure. Because of the high population density in West Bengal, per capita endowment of land happens to be low. Most of the land is under agricultural use and as a result of the progress in agriculture intensity of cultivation is also relatively high. Since small, marginal and middle peasants in the State own 84% of the land, the process of acquisition of land for industry and infrastructure is a complex as well as sensitive issue. In the recent past, the opposition has consistently tried to isolate the LF government, especially the CPI (M), from the peasantry, using this sensitive issue. Land acquisition for building industry, infrastructure, etc., has happened in the past. But never did we face such resistance to development on the question of land. In order to carry forward the programme of development, this issue should be satisfactorily resolved. The fear among the peasantry of losing their land has to be addressed in a serious manner. Although the amount of land required for industries and infrastructure is meager compared to the total amount of land and cultivated area in the State, the matter needs to be considered with seriousness. Besides ensuring adequate compensation, specific planning is required for alternative sources of income for families whose land is being acquired. The local people need to be involved in the process of land acquisition and fixing the compensation amount. Confidence has to be generated among the local people regarding the positive economic and social benefits of the projects for which land is being acquired. These tasks are not only administrative but also political.”

35. “Caution is also required in changing land use for the purpose of industry. Priority should be given to setting up of industries in relatively less fertile land. LF government has already taken steps in this regard. Large industries are mainly being set up in relatively less fertile land inappropriate for agriculture, in the regions of West Midnapore, Bankura, Purulia, Asansol, Durgapur and Birbhum. However, all types of industries cannot be built in those regions. The Haldia industrial region needs to be expanded in order to take advantage of the port facility. Similarly, there are possibilities to build a large industrial region in and around Siliguri and Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. Large areas in and around Kolkata, North and South 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly are traditional industrial belts. These areas are most suitable for technology intensive manufacturing and IT industries. Urbanization is also high in these areas. Large-scale transfer of agricultural land is taking place in these areas in response to market forces. The government has to take planned measures in this regard. Besides, initiatives are underway to develop industries centering Kalyani in the Nadia district. Overall, besides the development of 6 large industrial regions in the State, initiatives need to be taken in order to develop at least one industrial zone in every district, which will provide all facilities for setting up small and medium enterprises.”

36. After the experience of Nandigram where a chemical hub was proposed to be set up and the political and administrative mistakes made, we must be all the more careful on large-scale land acquisition. The land use policy decided by the West Bengal government should be implemented. While attracting corporate investment, we should be careful to see that they do not extract unreasonable concessions that go against public interest. While pushing for greater industrialization with private investment, we should also tell the people that such private sector industries cannot solve the basic problems associated with the liberalized capitalist system. We should organise the working class to fight class exploitation that will continue and increase with the neo-liberal policies of the Centre. The Left-led governments, while fostering more investments and industries, will firmly continue to defend the interests of the workers and trade union rights.

37. In the industrialization policy, our governments must provide for the defence of the public sector and its strengthening. In West Bengal, in the recent period, important steps have been taken. In Central PSUs, the modernization plan for IISCO under SAIL, costing Rs 10,000 crores, is being implemented. Kulti Iron Co, Burn and Braithwaite, Bengal Chemicals, and Glucanate, which were sick, are being revived. The restructuring of state public sector undertakings should result in viable units, some in the joint sector, apart from those which will be revived as private enterprises. In Kerala, significant success has been achieved in turning around some of the loss making state PSUs due to the restructuring packages steps to improve productivity and strategic tie-ups with central PSUs. Out of the 42 state enterprises 22 units made profits in 2006–07 against 12 in 2005–06. By the end of 2007–08 it is expected that 29 units will be made profitable.

38. A serious problem faced by our state governments is the financial crunch which affects public expenditure and developmental expenditure in the plan. West Bengal had faced a serious financial crunch a few years ago which had led to cuts in plan outlay and expenditure. In Kerala, during the LDF government of 1996–2001, a

similar financial crunch had an adverse affect on our implementation of welfare measures which had a political fallout. The Central government's policies have led to further erosion of states' autonomy and capacity to raise resources. The debt burden is mounting. The highly unequal share of resources between the Centre and the states and the squeeze imposed on public investment and allocation of resources had an adverse impact on our state governments. It is important that we take up centre-state relations in a more concerted and comprehensive manner in the coming days.

39. The 18th Congress Political Resolution stated: "Faced with the neo-liberal policies of the Centre, the Left-led governments have to struggle hard to pursue policies which ensure pro-people and balanced development. While promoting private investment, the Left Front governments defend the public sector in key areas, protect and, if possible, expand public expenditure in the social sector and project alternative policies to protect the poorer sections who are the worst affected by the policies pursued by the Central government."

40. In the present situation, the reality is that the state governments are severely handicapped as far as social sector expenditure and welfare measures are concerned. In West Bengal we are struggling to provide adequate resources for expansion and upgrading of educational and health systems. In Kerala, we are fighting to maintain the strong public distribution system built up over decades. The public educational school system is languishing with more and more private enterprises at all levels of education. In both West Bengal and Kerala, serious efforts should be made by the state governments to mobilize more resources by improving the tax-GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) ratio.

41. In spite of limitations, Left-led state governments have taken measures to reduce poverty, create new welfare measures and improve living conditions. As a result, there has been a distinct improvement in the living conditions of the people. The infant mortality rate measured per 1,000 live births in 2006 was 38 in West Bengal, 31 in Tripura and 15 in Kerala which has the best record in the country. The all India rate is 57. As far as life expectancy is concerned, it has improved considerably in West Bengal to 64.5 years for males and 67.2 for females. Kerala has life expectancy of 70.7 for males and 75 for females. In Tripura, life expectancy is 71 for males and 74 for females. The all India average is 61 for males and 62.5 for females. In the sphere of literacy, as per the 2001 census, West Bengal had a literacy rate of 69.2 per cent, Kerala 90.09 per cent and Tripura 73.2 per cent. According to studies in Tripura, the literacy rate is now 80.14. The all-India average is 63.4.

42. In West Bengal, steps have been taken for the welfare of the working class. Rs 750 per month is given to workers in factories and tea gardens which were shut for more than a year. A provident fund scheme for unorganized sector workers has more than 12 lakh workers, and another provident fund scheme for agricultural labourers has more than nine lakh workers enrolled. In Kerala after the LDF government assumed office, arrears of agricultural welfare pensions have been cleared. Social welfare pensions are being enhanced. SC/ST student allowances have been increased. To tackle agrarian distress, an agriculture debt relief commission has been constituted. Farmers in distress can apply to the commission for relief. Since then, there were no suicide cases of farmers in Wayanad district in 2007. West Bengal has conducted a successful rural sanitation programme under Nirmal; 80 per cent of rural families

have toilets now. The number of Self Help Groups is over 7.3 lakhs and the SHGs formed under panchayats are the second highest in the country. In Tripura, significant progress has been made in scheduled caste areas in providing schools, power connectivity, roads and other facilities due to the 33-point cluster programme. A similar 37 point programme is being undertaken in the tribal areas. The rural sanitation programme is also progressing well.

43. Despite all the constraints, we have to continue to take measures for the amelioration of poverty, provision of social welfare to weaker sections and welfare measures for the working class, rural poor, women, minorities, scheduled castes and tribes. In West Bengal, the literacy rate which was 69.2 per cent (2001 census) has to be taken forward towards total literacy. There should be steps to reduce drop out rate in the primary and secondary stage and upgradation of schools upto standard VIII. Rural electrification has to be stepped up and health services improved. For this, the delivery system has also to be streamlined. In Kerala, we have to struggle to maintain the strong public distribution system build up over decades. While upgrading the public school system, steps to exercise social control over private sector education have to be taken. In Kerala, the traditional industries are crisis-ridden and the government has constantly to pay attention to the welfare of the workers in this sector. In Tripura, because of the prolonged period of extremist activity, development in the tribal areas have lagged behind. Now with the improving security situation, special attention has to be paid to development in the remote tribal areas and making the autonomous district council a living instrument for socio-economic upliftment of the tribal people.

44. The Left-led government in the three states are coalition governments. Though the CPI(M) is the biggest party, there are partners with diverse views and character. The nature of the coalition results in limitations on what can be done through the various ministries.

45. While there are common problems faced by all the three states regarding the resource crunch and Central government's policies, it is important to keep in mind the different conditions in the three states. In West Bengal there has been significant agricultural development in the 1970s and 1980s. The industrial decline of Bengal has to be seen in the context that historically it was an industrialized state at the time of independence. In Kerala, agriculture, particularly food production, has been on the decline. The nature of industrialization in Kerala also cannot be on the same pattern as in West Bengal. Kerala is one of the most advanced states as far as social sector indicators are concerned. In order to maintain the social gains in Kerala, priority needs to be given for industrial and agricultural growth. In Tripura, which is a backward border state surrounded on three sides by Bangladesh, with 30 per cent tribal population and the problem of extremism, the development priorities will be different from the other two states. But in all the three states, it is necessary to periodically review the implementation of policies, the priorities set and gear up the Party for fresh tasks.

46. An important dimension in all the three states is the role of the panchayats, municipalities and local bodies. In West Bengal much of the advances made have been through the work of the three-tier panchayat system. As the state conference resolution pointed out: "In five years work and allocation have both increased, along

with an increase in spending and speed in target implementation. The Party has been providing the guidance, supervision and check up of the work in the panchayats which has been a major source of strength for the implementation of the government's programmes and schemes. A significant role has been played by the panchayats in the setting up of Self Help Groups." In Tripura too our work in the panchayats has contributed to the development programmes of the government. In Kerala, various initiatives were taken up by the Party in the past including the People's Planning. Under the present government too, though with some delay, the government is going to take follow up measures on decentralization programme. The problems of the urban areas are growing. Despite our reservations about some of the JNNURM conditionalities, the Party decided that we should accept the JNNURM funds for urban development in Kerala. West Bengal has also taken up the scheme. We should tell the people about the conditionalities that we do not approve.

47. At the all-India level, the Party will oppose the whole gamut of neo-liberal policies and continuously strive to project alternative policies. Both in terms of the macro level policies and on specific issues, the Party will suggest alternative policies. It must be understood that what is being advocated at the all India level to change the general economic policies and specific sectoral and issue based measures cannot be automatically implemented by the Left-led state governments. We have already cited the example of the SEZ policy. There are other policies too. The all-India stand and what can be done at the state level has to be discussed and a policy evolved for the state governments keeping in mind the all-India position. We have taken a stand of outright opposition to FDI in retail trade. But with the big Indian companies entering retail trade, the displacement of small shopkeepers and traders is a growing threat. The Polit Bureau had worked out a comprehensive policy for regulating the entry of corporate and organised sector into the retail trade. Our stand would be to demand that the Central government introduce licensing and regulation norms. But since this is not being done, corporate entry into retail is expanding in a big way. What can be done in such a situation is that the state governments can get regulations framed and implemented through the municipal corporations. Both in West Bengal and Kerala this needs to be done. In the case of private universities some state governments have passed legislations setting up private universities. There is no central law providing for private universities. The Supreme Court had struck down the Chattisgarh law in which scores of private universities were set up. In the three Left-led states, private universities should not be sanctioned. The point to be made is that between the all-India position which opposes the existing policy or advocates an alternative policy, in the states we should see issue by issue and policy by policy how we can implement them. In some cases we may refuse outright to implement certain measures, in certain other cases it may not be possible to do that. Then we must devise a via media in which some aspects of our position and alternative are included.

48. On the issue of Centre-State relations, in the past, the West Bengal government took many initiatives. The statement of the Srinagar conclave of opposition parties on centre-state relations in October 1983 was due to the initiative of the Party leadership and the Chief Minister of West Bengal. On financial matters also, the West Bengal Finance Minister brought together finance ministers of different states to take a common stand. An important dimension currently is the changed situation in centre-state relations. We have to formulate a platform of policies regarding the restructuring of centre-state relations. As pointed out in the political

resolution we have not been able to take this up after the 18th Congress. To stop the new type of encroachment on state powers and to ensure a just share in the devolution of resources we must be able to build a broad platform consisting of other regional parties and democratic forces.

49. While running state governments the policies and steps that we take should be viewed in the light of the all India tactical line and policies that we advocate. While working within serious constraints, the Party and the leadership of the state governments have to be conscious that any policy or measures taken will have their impact at the all-India level and all over the country. We have to constantly discuss and formulate policy measures which will balance the needs of the government with that of projecting the alternative policies that we are advocating. Just as the achievement of the Left-led governments in land reforms, panchayat system, defence of secularism, welfare measures for the people have had a positive impact in the rest of the country and help the Party in its campaign and projection of alternative policies, similarly any weaknesses or wrong steps has also a negative impact. In the recent period, we saw how the Nandigram events were used by the ruling classes and the big business media to defame and slander the Party. It is an important weapon in the anti-CPI(M) propaganda. That is why it is important that the entire party has a unified understanding about the role the state governments can play in the present situation and what type of policies and measures they can adopt.

50. The Left-led governments have played an important role in expanding the influence and base of the Party in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. It is this base which has contributed to the projection of the Party's policies and the Left's politics at the national level. The movements in these three states have strengthened the all-India movement. The Left-led governments are functioning within severe constraints after the phase of liberalization. The Party has to constantly devise ways by which the government can pursue pro-people policies and undertake measures which can meet the minimum needs of the people while also helping the Party to project alternative policies at the national level. The defence of the Left-led governments is an intrinsic part of the national agenda of the Party and the Left and democratic forces.

Part III

ORGANISATION

The 18th Congress, after reviewing the organisational situation such as the growth of the Party membership, mass organisation membership, rallying strength of the Party and mass organisations and the electoral performance of the Party, came to the conclusion that the Party was not able to achieve expansion during the period between 17th and 18th Congresses. The overall assessment was that the Party was maintaining its strength in stronger states and declining in some weaker states and areas. Nonetheless, the Party Congress summed up the whole experience and stated that wherever and whenever serious and sustained efforts were made, the Party was able to achieve expansion. The work reports from states showed that the situation offered opportunities for the Party's advance. The Party Congress also concluded that the Party and the Left were placed in a favourable situation in the country. Hence, the Congress decided that the immediate task before the Party was to make use of the opportunities for expansion of the Party.

On the basis of the assessment of the situation and review of the experience of the implementation of the tasks set out by the 17th Congress and Central Committee decisions, the 18th Congress set out the following tasks for implementation:

1. Concrete plans should be prepared for making use of the opportunities for expansion at all levels and the tasks should be implemented on a time-bound basis. Priority states, districts and areas should be identified.
2. Agitations and struggles should be organised at an all-India level. Importance should be given to organising local struggles by taking up partial and immediate demands of common people. Mass organisations should be activated.
3. The political, ideological and organisational consciousness of the Party members should be raised.
4. A document on ideological issues should be prepared.
5. Young cadre at all levels should be recruited and deployed in different parts with specific tasks assigned to them.
6. A rectification campaign should be conducted to eradicate all violations of organisational principles and to streamline Party at all levels.
7. All violations of Communist norms should be pinned down and fought against.

The Central Committee and Party committees at different levels made efforts to implement the decisions of the Party Congress. The Central Committee made an interim review of the experience of implementation of the tasks and adopted a document, 'Report on Implementation of Organisational Tasks,' in its meeting held on September 24–26, 2006. The CC document explained the immediate organisational tasks. They are:

“1. Concrete plans should be made for implementing the Party Congress decisions on a time-bound basis. Half-yearly and yearly review should be organised from the Central Committee to branches. The review document should point out the achievements, shortcomings and failures and also the future tasks in concrete terms.

2. More stress should be given to build mass organisations and Party building. Work of the Party and mass organisations should be reoriented on the basis of Party documents. The review of the work of all mass organisations should be completed within a period of one year. The PB should prepare a time table for this. Policy documents on student and youth fronts should be finalised within six months.

3. Make more efforts for activising Party members and cadre in all states. While making plans, the electoral prospects in the state should be kept in mind. The Party should be able to win more assembly and parliament seats in the coming elections.

4. A document on ideological issues should be prepared for discussion within six months time.

5. The Central Committee should prepare an updated rectification document for providing a fresh thrust to the rectification campaign. For this, the Polit Bureau should elicit information and review of the experience of rectification through a questionnaire to the state committees.”

The tasks set out by the 18th Congress and the Central Committee documents and ‘Report on Implementation of Organisational Tasks’ for achieving expansion of the Party are related to four broad areas of organisational functioning—improving the quality of Party membership and functioning of the branches and Party committees; improving collective functioning; implementation of the Marxist-Leninist understanding on the interrelationship between Party and mass organisations; and strengthening of the functioning of the Party Centre.

Progress Made

Since the 18th Congress, the Party has been able to make progress on many aspects of organisation. The achievements are as follows:

1. The Party Centre’s intervention in political and policy matters has been enhanced.
2. There has been an improvement in the functioning of the Party Centre with the working of the Central secretariat and better functioning of the sub-committees and departments.
3. More extensive political campaigns at the all-India level have been organised.
4. There has been a growth in Party membership and of the mass organisations.
5. Some more attention has been paid to the priority states.
6. More attention has been paid to Party education and more Central schools organised.
7. Circulation of *People’s Democracy* has increased to the highest ever level with new editions being brought out from Chennai, Agartala and Kochi.

8. More agit-prop material has been produced in the form of pamphlets and booklets.
9. Efforts were made to take up issues concerning tribal and minority sections.
10. Implementing the directive of the 18th Congress, the Central Committee adopted two documents—‘On Party’s Perspective on Women’s Issues and Tasks’ and ‘Student Front Policy and Tasks’.
11. A new beginning has been made taking up dalit issues at the all-India level and in states.

EXPANSION OF THE PARTY AND MASS ORGANISATIONS

Party Membership

Party Membership Figures:

2004	2007	Increase	% of increase
8,67,763	9,82,155	1,14,392	13.18

Party membership was 8,67,763 at the time of the 18th Congress in 2004 and it increased to 9,82,155 in 2007. There is an increase of 1,14,392 Party members during this period and the percentage of increase is 13.18 per cent. The increase in Party membership between 17th and 18th Congress was 9 per cent.

Among the states, West Bengal recorded the highest increase of 46,761 members followed by 21,663 in Andhra Pradesh, 20,339 in Kerala and 16,421 in Tripura. Except in Tamilnadu and Goa, Party membership increased in all states. The fall in membership in Tamilnadu is 4,052 and Goa is 6. The decline in membership in Tamilnadu is not due to the weakening of the Party but due to the tightening of the membership recruitment process and the annual check-up of the membership for renewal.

The percentage of growth of Party membership in Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh is less than the all-India average rate of growth. Kerala has the highest number of membership and the Party is taking steps to tighten recruitment of Party members and, hence, the rate of growth is only 6.43.

The membership figures in Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Orissa and Punjab show fluctuations in Party membership during these years. Weakness in the recruitment processes, providing political and organisational education, check-up and renewal of Party membership, presence of inactive Party members and inactive branches and Party committees are the major reasons for the steep ups and downs in membership figures. Each Party state committee should review the concrete reasons for the ups and downs in Party membership and should take appropriate remedial measures.

Party Membership—Priority States

2004	2007	Increase	% of increase
47,679	54,504	6,825	14.31

Among the priority states, the total increase in Party membership is 6,825 and the percentage of increase is 14.31 per cent. The percentage of increase is more than the

average all-India increase. During the period between 17th and 18th Congress, the increase in membership in the priority states was less than the increase at the all-India level. The percentage of increase in priority states was only 7.3 per cent during the intervening period between 17th and 18th Congress. But the main increase in membership is from Assam, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. The increase of membership in Bihar was only 7.43 per cent and in Uttar Pradesh, it was 5.07 per cent.

Party Membership—Hindi-Speaking States

2004	2007	Increase	% of increase
37,885	44,423	6,538	17.25

Among the Hindi-speaking states—Bihar, Chattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh—the membership increase is 6,538 and the percentage increase is 17.25. The percentage of increase during the period between 17th and 18th Congress was only 6.2 which was much less than the percentage of increase at the all-India level. Both in the case of priority states and Hindi-speaking states, the trend of the rate of growth of Party membership remaining less than the all-India rate of growth of Party membership has been reversed and it is more than the average rate of growth at the all-India level. This is a positive development but the pace of growth has to be strengthened further.

Mass Organisations' Membership

Membership Details of Each Mass Front

Front	18th Congress	19th Congress	Increase	% of increase
TU	34,36,282	39,79,295	5,43,013	15.8
Kisan	1,71,78,772	2,13,66,976	41,88,204	24.4
Agricultural Workers	29,37,261	42,50,754	13,13,493	44.7
Women	81,24,685	1,11,06,118	29,81,433	36.69
Youth	1,42,89,210	1,71,50,232	28,61,022	20.02
Student	31,88,760	39,39,791	7,51,031	23.5
Total	4,91,54,970	6,17,93,166	1,26,38,196	25.7

The combined membership of all mass organisations increased from 4,91,54,970 to 6,17,93,166, an increase of 1,26,38,196 which is 25.7 per cent. This is the highest ever increase in mass organisation membership during a period between two Party Congresses.

Membership of Each Mass Front in Priority States

Front	18 th Congress	19 th Congress	Increase/ Decrease	% of increase
TU	2,08,329	2,33,062	24,733	11.9
Kisan	7,00,274	9,77,529	2,77,255	39.6
Agricultural Workers	2,06,283	2,87,685	81,402	39.5
Women	2,16,055	3,30,064	1,14,009	52.7
Youth	3,20,057	3,85,903	65,846	20.6
Student	1,07,297	94,890	(-) 12,407	-13.1
Total	17,58,295	23,09,133	5,50,838	31.3

Membership of Each Mass Front in Hindi-Speaking States

Front	18 th Congress	19 th Congress	Increase/Decr ease	% of increase
TU	2,39,851	2,75,216	35,365	14.7
Kisan	5,26,342	9,38,900	4,12,558	78.4
Agricultural Workers	1,84,078	2,45,675	61,597	33.5
Women	2,29,035	2,88,733	59,698	26.1
Youth	3,02,748	4,22,161	1,19,413	39.4
Student	1,34,069	1,46,075	12,006	9
Total	16,16,123	23,16,760	7,00,637	43.4

The trade union membership increased from 34,36,282 to 39,79,295; the increase is 5,43,013 and the percentage of increase is 15.8.

Among the priority states, trade union membership increased from 2,08,329 to 2,33,062 and the percentage of increase is 11.9 per cent. The increase was only 4.2 per cent during the period between 17th and 18th Party Congresses. But the Bihar membership declined. TU membership in Hindi-speaking states increased from 2,39,851 to 2,75,216, an increase of 14.74 per cent. During the period between 17th and 18th Party Congresses, the TU membership declined and the percentage of decline was 13.8. TU membership declined in most of the states during 2003 and 2004 but picked up in 2005. It has become a common feature that in many states, trade union membership declines during the intervening years between two trade union all-India conferences and increases in the conference years. The decline in membership during the years in between two all-India trade union conferences is a matter to be addressed seriously. This shows the slackness of state committees in collecting and paying the affiliation fees to the All India Centre.

Kisan front membership increased from 1,71,78,772 to 2,13,66,976, an increase of 41,88,204 and the percentage of increase is 24.4 per cent. Among the priority states, membership increased from 7,00,274 to 9,77,529, an increase of 39.6 per cent. In the Hindi-speaking states, membership increased from 5,26,342 to 9,38,900, an increase of 78.4 per cent. The membership increase in priority states and Hindi-speaking states is much more than the all-India average increase. There is a substantial increase in the

membership in Rajasthan, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. Uttar Pradesh membership went up to 2,03,371 and declined to 1,59,846.

Agricultural workers front is organised in 14 states. They are: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh. There was no membership in Gujarat for the year 2006–07. Agricultural workers front membership increased from 29,37,261 to 42,50,754, an increase of 13,13,493 and the percentage of increase is 44.7. This is the highest ever increase of agricultural workers front membership during a period between two Party Congresses. Among the priority states, agricultural workers are organised only in Bihar, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. Membership in priority states increased from 2,06,283 to 2,87,685 and the percentage of increase is 39.5. Among the Hindi-speaking states, agricultural workers are organised in Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Membership in Hindi-speaking states increased from 1,84,078 to 2,45,675 and the percentage of increase is 33.5. The major increase is from Bihar. The membership in Andhra Pradesh increased from 5,56,470 to 12,65,283 (127.4 per cent) and the membership more than doubled. The Andhra Pradesh unit was very active in enrolling those who are unemployed in the NREGA and this helped in increasing membership.

Women's front membership increased from 81,24,685 to 1,11,06,118, an increase of 29,81,433 which is 36.7 per cent. Among the priority states, women's front membership increased from 2,16,055 to 3,30,064, an increase of 1,14,009 and the percentage is 52.7. In Hindi-speaking states, membership increased from 2,29,035 to 2,88,733 and the percentage of increase is 26.1. Women membership in Delhi declined substantially.

Youth front membership increased from 1,42,89,210 to 1,71,50,232, an increase of 28,61,022 and the percentage of increase is 20 per cent. Among the priority states, membership increased from 3,20,057 to 3,85,903, an increase of 20.6 per cent. The increase in membership in Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh is a positive development. Maharashtra membership declined. Assam membership increased to 1,03,879 in 2006 and then declined to 62,500. Among the Hindi-speaking states, membership increased from 3,02,748 to 4,22,161, an increase of 39.4 per cent. Rajasthan membership increased substantially.

Student front membership increased from 31,88,760 to 39,39,791, an increase of 23.5 per cent. Among the priority states, student membership suffered a decline from 1,07,297 to 94,890, a decline of 13.1 per cent. Membership declined in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Hindi-speaking states, student membership increased from 1,34,069 to 1,46,075, an increase of 9 per cent, which is less than the all-India average rate of growth. The membership increased only in Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Delhi and Rajasthan and declined in Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The major increase is from Rajasthan.

Experience of Implementation of Selecting Priority States and Preparing One-Year Plans

The 18th Congress reviewed the experience of the implementation of the tasks set out at the 17th Congress and decided to continue with the efforts for expansion of the Party and mass fronts and to concentrate efforts in priority states.

Priority States

Assam: Party membership increased from 10,901 in 2004 to 13,072 in 2007 and the percentage of increase is 19.9, which is higher than the all-India average increase of 13.16 per cent. TU front membership increased from 58,726 to 59,651, kisan front membership increased from 1,35,878 to 2,31,703, women's front membership increased from 60,271 to 82,268 and student front membership increased from 25,594 to 27,118. Youth front membership increased from 57,800 in 2004 to 1,03,879 in 2006 and declined to 62,500 in 2007. The collective functioning of the state centre, state secretariat and state committee has improved. More efforts have been made for political education of the Party members. In the state, border committees have been formed with Tripura and they are functioning. Different ethnic groups are active and trying to divide the people on the basis of ethnic identities. The extremist organisations are active in different parts. This situation is creating difficulties for building unity of the common people. The Party and mass organisations are active in the state. Some progress has been made in certain areas.

Bihar: Party membership increased from 17,353 in 2004 to 18,644 in 2007 and the percentage of increase is 7.43 which is less than the all-India average rate of growth. TU membership declined from 23,717 to 22,415 during this period. Kisan front membership increased from 2,30,080 to 3,25,484, agricultural workers union front membership increased from 88,078 to 1,36,619, women's front membership increased from 29,948 to 54,157, youth front membership increased from 1,13,450 to 1,52,075 and student front membership declined from 27,876 to 26,781 during this period. There is an improvement in the functioning of the state secretariat, state committee and certain district committees. The efforts should be continued. Kisan, agricultural workers union and youth front activities improved. Kisan and agricultural workers fronts took up certain local issues and organised struggles. In certain areas, we have been able to make some expansion. But there is unevenness in activities and expansion of the movement. Landlord sections and other mafia gangs killed some of our important activists in certain districts. Maoist attacks also increased in certain areas. The Party has to meet these challenges. More attention should be given to build trade union, student and youth fronts. Development of wholetimers is neglected. Wholetime young cadre should be identified and arrangements should be made for payment of regular wages to them. The Party state Centre should give attention for political intervention on all political issues at the state level.

Jharkhand: Party membership increased from 3,292 in 2004 to 5,043 in 2006 and declined to 4,562 in 2007. The percentage of increase is 38.57 which is higher than the all-India average. TU membership increased from 38,181 to 43,634, kisan front membership increased from 30,000 to 70,299, women's front membership increased from 25,000 to 46,975, youth front membership increased from 28,500 to 42,055 and student front membership increased from 9,522 to 10,176 during this period. The

Party and mass fronts have been active during this period. The functioning of the state Centre, state committee and many district committees improved. The Party leadership is intervening on all important political issues and people's issues. Party has been able to make some advance. More attention should be given for work among the tribals. Maoists are attacking our activists and trying to obstruct our work. Party has to adopt appropriate tactics to meet this challenge.

Uttar Pradesh: Party membership increased from 5,877 in 2004 to 6,175 in 2007 and the percentage of growth is only 5.07, which is less than the all-India increase. TU membership increased from 24,350 to 25,791, kisan front membership increased from 1,32,169 to 2,03,371 in 2006 and declined to 1,59,846, agricultural workers union front membership increased from 62,250 to 67,535, women's front membership increased from 39,150 to 60,671, youth front membership increased from 37,400 to 54,288 and student front membership declined from 12,283 to 7,417 during this period. There is some improvement in the functioning of the state committee and certain district committees. But there is weakness in the functioning of kisan and student fronts. More cadres are needed at the Party and mass organisation state centres. More attention should be given for building student and youth fronts. Kisan and agricultural workers fronts should strengthen the functioning of the state centres and should build local struggles on immediate issues. Party has to meet the challenges from the casteist and communal forces.

Maharashtra: Party membership increased from 10,256 in 2004 to 12,051 in 2007 and the percentage of increase is 17.50 which is higher than the all-India average growth rate. TU membership increased from 63,355 to 81,571, kisan front membership increased from 1,72,147 to 2,01,114 in 2006 and declined to 1,90,197, agricultural workers union front membership increased from 55,955 to 83,540, women's front membership increased from 61,686 to 85,993, youth front membership increased from 82,907 to 91,685 in 2005 and declined to 74,985 in 2007 and student front membership declined from 32,022 to 23,398. Party, trade union, kisan, agricultural workers union and women fronts became active during this period. Party state committee and certain district committees became more active. There has been substantial increase in the mobilization strength of the Party and mass fronts. Collection of levy and Party fund has improved. Party has been able to make some advance. Party has been able to contain the disruption and sustain its base in Thane. Party and mass organisation centres should be strengthened. More attention should be given to build student and youth fronts. The efforts to take up local issues and organising agitations and struggles should be continued and strengthened. Priority should be given for well equipped and functioning state centre. More efforts should be made for strengthening the collective functioning. More attention should be given to political education.

The selection of priority states and priority districts for concentrating efforts for expansion of the movement has helped to a certain extent in activating Party and mass organisations in those states and districts. The progress in UP and Bihar, the two biggest states, is not satisfactory. Though more attention has been given by the Party Centre to the priority states, it was not adequate to the requirements needed. The PB has not been able to guide the all India mass front centres to make appropriate arrangements to give special attention to the needs of the priority states. This should be done. The 18th Congress gave a directive to recruit sufficient number of cadre and

allot them in Party and mass front work. This was not implemented in its true spirit. New cadre, particularly wholetimers, are necessary to carry out this new task. The PB should ensure that adequate number of cadre are recruited and deployed in all priority states. The overall experience underscores the fact that sufficient priority was not given in concentrating work in priority states and districts.

The preparation of concrete plans for expansion of the Party and mass fronts was delayed in many states due to elections, floods etc. The plans were prepared at different time in different states. After the preparation of the plan at the state level, preparation of plan at the district/zonal/area, local and branch levels took three to four months. Hence, the implementation of the state plan started at the branch level only after four or five months after the finalization of the plan at the state level. The review of the implementation and preparation of the next year plan also got delayed. So we need to review this approach of one-year plan.

The idea behind the one-year plan was that each state committee should prepare concrete plans for expansion on the basis of the decisions of the Party Congress and state conferences. Henceforth, each state committee should make plans for implementation on the basis of the tasks set out at the Party Congress and state conferences. The plans should be implemented on a time-bound basis. This process should continue upto the branch level. Each branch has to review its work at the time of renewal of membership as decided by the 14th Congress. The state committees and lower committees should conduct a mid-term review of the experience of the implementation of the tasks. On the basis of the mid-term review, thrust can be given to complete the tasks.

On the Question of Expansion

The expansion of the Party can be assessed by considering the growth of the Party membership and mass front membership, rallying strength of the Party and mass fronts and the electoral strength of the Party.

The Party and mass fronts made some progress. But the unevenness in growth is continuing. West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura are our strong states. Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu are considered as growing movements. Out of the increase of 1,14,392 Party membership, an increase of 1,01,132 and out of the increase of 1,26,38,196 mass front membership, an increase of 1,11,66,293 are from these states. But there is some growth in Party membership and mass front membership in certain weaker states and that rate of growth is more than the all-India average rate of growth. This is a positive sign.

The Party is able to rally wider sections of people during this period. The mass front reports also show that the mass fronts have been more active during this period. There is also a progress in the rallying strength of the Party and mass fronts in many states.

Party is leading the state governments in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala. In Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu, Party has nine members each in the legislative assembly and has nominal representations in legislative assemblies in Assam, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. The Party has representation in Parliament only from five states—Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West

Bengal, Tamilnadu and Tripura. The unevenness in growth and expansion of the Party is reflected in the electoral strength. In the Assembly elections, Party achieved big victories in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura and increased seats and votes. In Tamilnadu, the Party won nine seats and in Assam, two seats. But the Party was not able to win any seats in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Gujarat and Punjab. In Punjab, our popular support declined. The Party has not been able to make electoral gains in any of the weaker states. It is also a fact that the influence of the Party is not appropriately reflected in electoral terms. The Party should seriously consider this aspect and make appropriate plans for making electoral gains in states.

Despite the concerted efforts of the enemies, the Party is maintaining its influence and slowly expanding its base in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Andhra Pradesh achieved some growth. Tamilnadu is maintaining its strength. Party and mass organisations made some progress in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. Party and mass fronts became active in certain other states. But the level of progress differs from state to state and district to district. The overall situation shows that the Party has not made considerable expansion in any of the weaker states. The unevenness in growth and expansion is continuing. It is also a fact that the Party and mass fronts have not been able to make use of the potentialities for growth and expansion during this period. The hostile forces are rallying together to stop our advances and to weaken us. The favourable opportunities may not last long. Without making a breakthrough in our weaker states, it is very difficult to sustain the present strength and influence both in our strong and weak states. Each state committee has to self-critically review the situation and draw appropriate concrete tasks for growth and expansion.

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP

The 18th Congress decided to make serious efforts to improve the quality of Party members and their efficiency in order to effectively carry out their multifarious responsibilities for the expansion of the Party. Efforts have been made to tighten the process of recruitment of Party members, to improve the class and social composition of Party members, to provide political and organisational education and also to strengthen the functioning of the Party branches and committees at all levels.

Tightening of the Party Membership Recruitment

The Central Committee, in its meeting held on 14–16 December, 2005, adopted guidelines on Party recruitment, candidate members and enrolment of auxiliary members.

There is some improvement in the recruitment process. The practice of admitting candidate members from auxiliary groups is implemented in most of the states. The Party Centre has also received some complaints about manipulation of auxiliary group registers for admitting candidate members in order to show inflated membership figures for factional purposes. Deficiencies still exist in giving political and organisational education to AG members and candidate members. There are also weaknesses in objectively evaluating the work of AG members and candidate

members. In many places, meetings of AG members are not held. Branches, local committees or other higher committees who organise auxiliary groups should pay attention in holding meetings of the members. All AG members should be given political and organisational education.

The Party Centre received complaints from Punjab state committee about the Party membership in Ludhiana district. The Party Centre deputed Hannan Mollah and Hari Singh Kang, Central Secretariat members to conduct an enquiry and submit a report. Finally, it was found more than 400 names that appeared in the membership register are not qualified to be members.

The renewal report of the yearly scrutiny of membership and admission as candidate members and full members should be sent to the next higher committee by the branch and the next higher committee to its next higher committees and likewise upto the Central Committee. Different types of weaknesses exist in states and districts. All weaknesses should be rectified. The scrutiny of membership should be conducted as a serious organisational work. The state committees should pay sufficient attention to this.

Particulars of Party Members

The particulars of Party members are prepared on the basis of the details received at the Party Centre from the state committees. Out of the total 9,82,155 Party members, figures available for compilation is 9,47,254. Details have not been received from Goa, Manipur and Sikkim.

Age distribution:

The percentage of Party members at the all-India level upto the age group of 30 years is 16.77, between 31 to 40 years is 29.31, between 41 to 50 years is 31.77, between 51 to 60 years is 13.79, between 61 to 70 years is 6.82 and above 70 years is 1.51. The situation varies from state to state. More efforts should be made to recruit youth into the Party.

Year of joining the Party

At the all-India level, the percentage of Party members who joined the Party before 1947 is 0.04, between 1947 and 1963 is 0.59, between 1964 and 1976 is 3.87, between 1977 and 1991 is 28.22, between 1992 and 2002 is 31.93 and after 2002 is 35.31.

35.31 per cent of the Party members joined the Party after 2002. Though this is a positive sign of new members joining the Party in recent period, it underlines the importance of giving political and organisational education to the new Party members. 67.25 per cent of the Party members joined the Party after 1992. The situation varies from state to state. The figures from Andaman & Nicobar, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh show that more than 40 per cent of Party members have joined the Party after 2002. Tamilnadu has the lowest percentage of 20.03 in this category. States which have more Party members who have joined after 2002 should make special efforts to

provide political-organisational education in order to improve the quality of Party membership.

Class Composition:

At the all-India level, the percentage of Party members belonging to the working class is 32.36, agricultural labour is 23.76, poor peasant is 18.93, middle peasant is 10.25, rich peasant is 0.59, middle class is 11.46, landlord is 0.08 and the bourgeois is 0.05. At the all-India level, 75.06 per cent of the Party members are from working class, agricultural labourers and poor peasant. There is an improvement in the class composition of Party members in most states. Each state committee has to assess the situation and should take steps to improve the class composition of Party membership.

Scheduled Caste Composition:

At the all-India level, 19.93 per cent of the Party members are from scheduled castes. The percentage of Party members from scheduled castes in different states are: Andhra Pradesh—23.2 (18.76 in 2004), Assam—8.48 (7.06 in 2004), Bihar—24.38 (19.48 in 2004), Chattisgarh—16.65 (18.59 in 2004), Delhi—18.23, Gujarat—10.69 (9.74 in 2004), Haryana—28.86 (27.79 in 2004), Himachal Pradesh 12.21 (12.89 in 2004), Jammu & Kashmir 1.66, Jharkhand—18.82 (16.76 in 2004), Karnataka—19.38 (17.35 in 2004), Kerala—14.97 (15.86 in 2004), Madhya Pradesh—22.33 (21.25 in 2004), Maharashtra—9.7 (6.16 in 2004), Orissa—23.04 (17.55 in 2004), Punjab—49.74 (34.54 in 2004), Rajasthan—18.39 (1.44 in 2004), Tamilnadu—28.88 (24 in 2004), Tripura—19.03 (19.93 in 2004), Uttarakhand—15.52 (12.06 in 2004), Uttar Pradesh—16.10 (16.53 in 2004), West Bengal—22.25 (20 in 2004). In most states, there is increase in the scheduled caste composition in the Party. There is slight decline in scheduled caste composition from Kerala and Tripura.

Scheduled Tribe Composition:

At the all-India level, 6.43 per cent of the Party members are from Scheduled Tribes. The percentage of Party members from scheduled tribes in different states are: Andhra Pradesh—13.08 (10.89 in 2004), Assam—8.22 (7.64 in 2004), Bihar—2.12 (1.1 in 2004), Chattisgarh—35.44 (13.75 in 2004), Delhi—0.27, Gujarat—16.42 (14.3 in 2004) Himachal Pradesh—4.55 (3.61 in 2004), Jammu & Kashmir—3.08, Jharkhand—19.81 (23.26 in 2004), Karnataka—9.44 (9.27 in 2004), Kerala—0.90 (1.04 in 2004), Madhya Pradesh—16.96 (12.45 in 2004), Maharashtra—49.3 (49.6 in 2004), Orissa—18.99 (13.33 in 2004), Rajasthan—14.82 (10.03 in 2004), Tamilnadu—1.19 (1 in 2004), Tripura—34.31 (29.99 in 2004), Uttarakhand—0.85 (1.2 in 2004), Uttar Pradesh—2.05, West Bengal—5.40 (5.06 in 2004). There is an improvement in the scheduled tribe composition of the Party membership.

Muslim Minorities Composition:

At the all-India level, 10.22 per cent of the Party members are Muslims. The composition of Muslim minorities in different states are: Andaman & Nicobar—5.5, Andhra Pradesh—4.52 (4.1 in 2004), Assam—17.57 (17 in 2004), Bihar—11.29 (8.93 in 2004), Chattisgarh—2.26 (1.42 in 2004), Delhi—10.52, Gujarat—6.38 (9.59 in 2004) Haryana—2.49, Himachal Pradesh—1.05 (0.78 in 2004), Jammu & Kashmir—91.41, Jharkhand—9.37, Karnataka—7.40 (6.05 in 2004), Kerala—10.35 (9.44 in 2004), Madhya Pradesh—5.20 (5.42 in 2004), Maharashtra—7.1 (5.4 in 2004), Orissa—0.87 (0.37 in 2004), Punjab—1.08 (0.45 in 2004), Rajasthan—5.13 (9.78 in 2004), Tamilnadu—2.74 (4.4 Muslims + Christians in 2004), Tripura—5.67 (5.12 in

2004), Uttarakhand—5.80 (4.94 in 2004), Uttar Pradesh—13.12 (9.46 in 2004), West Bengal—14.67 (14.9 in 2004).

Christian Minorities Composition:

At the all-India level, 4.65 per cent of the Party members are Christians.

More efforts should be made to recruit Muslim and Christian minorities in the Party.

Women Composition:

11.93 per cent of the Party members are women. The percentage of women in different states are: Andaman & Nicobar—17.87, Andhra Pradesh—13.79 (partial figures) (10.17 in 2004), Assam – 15.35 (13.49 in 2004), Bihar—3.65, Chattisgarh—7.66, Delhi—18.88 (18.3 in 2004), Gujarat—16.44 (14.12 in 2004), Haryana—8.13, Jammu & Kashmir—0.60, Jharkhand—6.25, Karnataka—18.46 (16.18 in 2004), Kerala—11.28 (10.11 in 2004), Madhya Pradesh 12.39 (11.38 in 2004), Maharashtra—15.39 (12.9 in 2004), Orissa—7.32, Punjab—6.74, Rajasthan—5.39, Tamilnadu—13.34 (11.02 in 2004), Tripura—23.16 (20.11 in 2004), Uttarakhand—12.57, Uttar Pradesh—6.88, West Bengal—10.47 (9.37 in 2004).

There is an improvement in the women composition of the Party members. But the women composition of the Party membership is below 10 per cent in Bihar, Chattisgarh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. All these state committees should make special efforts to recruit more women. The pace of improvement in the composition of the women Party membership is not satisfactory and more efforts should be made to recruit more women into the Party.

Educational Background:

At the all-India level, 2.69 per cent of Party members are post-graduates, graduates—10.06, Higher Secondary/Intermediate/Pre-degree—14.97, upto class 10—44.90, upto class 5—19.51, no formal schooling—5.77.

Droppage of Party and Candidate Members:

At the all-India level, the average percentage of full Party members dropped is 7.73 per cent and candidate members dropped is 20.14 per cent. The figures in states are as follows: Andaman & Nicobar—7.3 (PM), 9.2 (CM), Andhra Pradesh—8.13 (PM), 23.91 (CM), Assam—4.8 (PM), 3.9 (CM), Bihar—4.91 (PM), Chattisgarh—3.26 (PM), 5.66 (CM), Delhi—13.49 (PM), 18.30 (CM), Haryana—6.09 (PM), 25.80 (CM), Himachal Pradesh—7.85 (PM), 15.68 (CM), Jharkhand—8.73 (PM+CM), 11.25 (new recruits), Karnataka—8.44 (PM), 13.19 (CM), Kerala—10.62 (PM), 25.91 (CM), Madhya Pradesh—6.79 (PM), 32.88 (CM), Orissa—0.56 (PM+CM), Punjab—0.48 (PM), 65.57 (CM), Rajasthan—0.39 (PM), 0.17 (CM), Tamilnadu—16.69 (PM), 64.29 (CM), Tripura—2.58 (PM), 8.30 (CM), Uttarakhand—8.71 (PM), 16.66 (CM), West Bengal—3.29 (PM), 1.25 (CM).

Among the states, the percentage of full Party members dropped in Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Uttarakhand are above the all-India average level of droppage of 7.73 per cent. The percentage of candidate members dropped in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Tamilnadu are above the all-India level of 20.15 per cent. The percentage

of the candidate members dropped in Punjab is 65.57, Tamilnadu 64.29, Madhya Pradesh 32.88 and Kerala 25.91. The lowest is West Bengal—only 1.25 per cent. The high percentage of candidate members dropped shows the weakness in Party recruitment, giving political and organisational education to the new members, inactivity of the Party branches and intermediate committees, etc. Special efforts should be made to educate the Party members and to activate the Party branches. The state committees which have higher percentage of droppages of full members and candidate members should discuss the reasons for the droppage seriously and immediate appropriate remedial measures should be taken. Tamilnadu state committee should give more attention to this aspect.

Party Levy Collection

The state reports from many states show that there is improvement in the collection of levy from Party members. But some committees failed to collect levy from Party members as fixed by the Central Committee. There are also reports that a section of Party members are giving false information about their income in order to give less levy than is due. Certain committees and a large number of branches allow such lapses on the part of the Party members. The payment of levy to the Party is a matter related to the political-organisational consciousness of the concerned Party member. The state committees should take appropriate steps for the collection of levy from the Party members as fixed by the Central Committee.

The Party Constitution stipulates that if a member has failed to deposit levy within three months after it is due, then the name of the Party member has to be removed from the Party rolls. In many places, levy is collected for the whole year at the time of renewal. This delay in collecting levy monthly creates difficulties for Party members for paying the levy in bulk. State committees and district committees should insist on monthly levy collection. This may also activate the functioning of the Party branches.

The West Bengal state report notes: “The past state conference mentioned the tendency to hide the actual income and to be tardy in paying the actual levy in due time. Side by side, increasing consciousness about the regular payment of levy, it must be ensured that within December 2006 at least district committee members (other than exceptional instances) must pay levy each month as it falls due. The same process will be applicable for zonal committee members (except for those comrades who depend on seasonal income) by June 2007. This should be applicable for local committee members by December 2007. Stress should be given on submitting the income right from the moment a comrade is recruited into the Party.

“The amount of levy received should be placed in each meeting of the district committee. This should be the practice at the level of the zonal committee as well. Through this practice, a natural process of paying levy would be build up based on spontaneity. Once the leading comrades adopt this practice and become habituated, the general members would accept it as a compulsory duty.”

Functioning of the Branches and Committees

Branch Functioning

There are 84,419 Party branches. Branch is the primary unit of the Party. It is the living link between the masses of workers, peasants, agricultural workers, middle class employees and other sections of people within its area or sphere.

The 18th Congress decided to make serious efforts for improving the functioning of the Party branches and activating inactive branches. The Central Committee, in December 2005, issued guidelines for improving the functioning of the Party branches. The guidelines insisted that the branches should hold at least 12 meetings in a year. The higher committee should conduct yearly review of the branches at the time of renewal of Party membership. The district committees should hold periodical meetings of the branch secretaries and also make concrete plans for training branch secretaries to make them politically and organisationally capable of discharging their responsibilities.

State committees made efforts to improve the functioning of the branches. Some state reports noted improvement in the functioning of the branches. There is no improvement in the case of branches in certain states. The following reports explain the present situation in states:

Tamilnadu: “There are 10,799 Party branches in the state. A Party branch can have only 15 members. But, in some districts, there are more than 15 members. In these districts, the decision of bifurcating such units and forming new units was not implemented. The last state conference states that lack of progress in the functioning of Party branches is the stumbling bloc to the expansion of the Party and mass organisations. . . . While making interim organisational review, which was taken up in 2006, on the functioning of branches, the state committee stated as follows: ‘On the basis of review of Party membership of 2005, among the Party branches in the state, about 20 per cent are meeting six times in a year, 40 per cent 3 to 5 times and 30 per cent are meeting 1 or 2 times in a year. 10 per cent of the branches have not met even once in a year’.”

Jharkhand: “On review of the branch functioning, it is observed that at most places, branches do not take independent initiatives which were observed during last campaigns. The district committees rely mostly on local committees for Party work without emphasising and ensuring the branch initiative. This needs to be corrected. There is some improvement in branch functioning in the recent past. But majority of the branches do not hold monthly meetings. They met only when there are some higher committee programmes or at the time of renewal. There is no system of sending reports of branch meetings to higher committees. Higher committees also could not ensure their presence in the branch meetings regularly.”

Karnataka: “In the year 2004, we had 723 branches in our state. During this period, the number of branches has increased to 745, some branches met once a year at the time of renewal. The state committee’s annual plan document clearly stated that the branches should meet at least once in a month. But in practice, most of the branches are not meeting regularly”.

Punjab: “The branch units which function and hold their meeting on their own can be counted on fingertips. The truth is that only 30 per cent of our branch units function. Comrades from higher committees go and hold their meetings. Other units become active only at the time of bigger campaigns. The attendance in the meetings is hardly enough to make the quorum. Many branch units pay little attention to mass organisations. There are several members who are not working in any mass organisation although they are kisans or agricultural workers.”

Kerala: “Majority of the branches hold regular meetings and take initiative on issues. But in certain places, branches are not holding regular meetings. This is happening in places where there are organisational weaknesses.

“The organisational situation of the district committees is reflected in the functioning of the branches. Where the district committees are organisationally active and intervene and monitor the activities of the branches, the branches are active. In such places, the direction that the branch should hold meetings once in two weeks takes place. The district committee should realize that its organisational weakness is the main reason for the inactivity of Party branch and should try to remedy the organisational weaknesses.”

The expansion of the Party and mass organisations largely depends on the improvement of the functioning of the Party branches. The efforts to improve the functioning of the Party branches should be continued. Workshops of branch secretaries and local committee members should be organised for organisational training of the branch secretaries. The Central secretariat should be entrusted with the task of monitoring the progress of activating Party branches.

Local Committees

The West Bengal state report states: “The index set by the state committee for division, that is, a minimum of 100 members for a local committee and 400 for a zonal committee must be kept in mind. The issue of proper and skilful leadership is improved while considering division of branches with less than 15 members and of local and zonal committees.

“The size of the committee should be made as small as feasible. This makes enriched discussion possible. In the case of larger zonal committee, caution should be exercised to prevent the secretariat guiding to substitute for the committee meetings.”

There are 5,069 local committees. Local committees are the next immediate higher committee of the branches and between branch and the area/zonal committees or the district committees. In states or districts where there is more membership, there are two layers of intermediate committees between the primary unit, branch and the district committee. In West Bengal, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, the pattern is—branch and above the branch, local committee and above the local committee, zonal/area committee and above zonal/area committee, district committee. In Tripura, there is only one layer of intermediate committee—local committee—in between branch and sub-divisional committees (sub-divisional committee is the next lower committee to the state committee). In Tamilnadu also, there is only one layer of intermediate committee between branch and district committee. The same pattern is seen in Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar

Pradesh. Some of these state committees are calling the intermediate committee between district committee and branch as tehsil committee, area committee, zonal committee, etc. In Chattisgarh, in certain places, local committees and zonal committees are there. In Karnataka also, there are zonal committees and local committees in certain districts. The state report states that the formation of local committees helped to activate branches and Party members.

The Central Committee instructed the state committees in 2005 that if there are three or more branches in a contiguous area under a district committee, a local committee should be organised between branch and district committee in order to effectively guide and assist the Party branches. As the next higher committee of Party branch, local committee can play an important role in the efficient functioning of the Party members and branches. If there is no local committee between branch and district committee, the district committee may not be able to guide and monitor the activities of all Party members and branches, if there are more branches under a district committee. The local committee can also play an important role in building mass organisation at the local committee level.

Special attention should be given to train the local committee members to ensure that they discharge their political-organisational tasks. Without strengthening the local committees, it is not possible to ensure the effective functioning of the Party branches. In states where local committees are there, they are guiding the Party members working in cooperative societies, panchayat institutions and mass fronts.

Zonal/Area Committees

There are 652 zonal/area committees. This is the next lower committee to the district committee and the next higher committee to the local committee.

If there are more local committees under a district committee and if the district committee is not able to guide and help the activities of local committees and branches, the formation of area/zonal intermediate committee between local committees and district committees can help in activating Party members and branches. If there are more branches under a local committee, the local committees may not be able to guide and assist the branches and Party members.

Considering this aspect, local committee has to be bifurcated. This will help in activating Party members and branches. Each state committee has to consider this aspect and take appropriate decision for forming intermediate committees in between local committees and district committees where Party membership and Party branches and local committees are more.

District Committees

West Bengal report states: "In many districts, district committees met once a month regularly. However, with a short timeframe for the meetings, the time for discussion becomes inadequate. If on occasions a two-day meeting is held, the scope for discussion increases and there is an improvement in the intense understanding among the committee members. District committee meetings should be turned into lively discussion sessions rather than adhering to the routine form. If the meetings are lengthy, members quit the session to attend to various task and other programmes. Thus, district committee meetings should be convened with adequate time so that no

member can take up any other programme coinciding with the meetings. The presence of the members throughout the meetings must be ensured and all members must attend the meetings in time.”

Assam report states: “The district committee meetings have become regular after the adoption of the organisational report. But, in most of the district meetings, the district secretary or the secretariat does not place written reports. In such a situation, the discussions in the meetings derails and the necessary issues are not properly discussed and given due importance. In the coming days, steps should be taken to ensure fruitful discussion. The district committees should periodically review the functioning of the committee and adopt plans for their activities. Each and every member of the district committee should be entrusted with a specific responsibility.”

There are 302 district committees and district organising committees. District committee is the next lower committee under the state committee. District committee need not necessarily be confined to an administrative division. The state committee can decide on the area of the district committee taking into account the needs of the movement. As per the guidelines issued by the Central Committee, there must be at least 200 Party members (including candidate members) to constitute a district committee. There should be at least 10 to 15 branches in that district. In very small states (in terms of population) and other special factors, these norms can be relaxed with the approval of the Central Committee. If the number of Party members and branches are less, only a district organising committee can be formed. Where there are three to five branches in a contiguous area, within such district, a local committee can be constituted. The district organising committee with local committees in certain areas and branches is the pattern of functioning till a full-fledged district committee is constituted.

A considerable number of district committees are not properly functioning in places where the Party, class and mass organisations are weak. In many places, district office or centralized work is not taking place. There is a shortage of sufficient number of wholetimers in many such districts. Special attention should be given to activate the district committees. This is necessary for the expansion of the Party and mass organisations. Minimum number of wholetimers should be selected and deployed in districts. As in the earlier days, cadre should be identified by the state committees and should be allotted as organisers in areas where the Party and mass organisations are weak or non-existent.

State Committees

There are 26 state committees and state organising committees under the Central Committee. There is no Party unit in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. Meghalaya state is part of the Assam state unit. Out of the six centrally-administered units, Andaman & Nicobar Islands has a separate state organising committee. Chandigarh is part of Punjab, Dadra & Nagar Haveli is part of Maharashtra, Pondicherry is part of Tamilnadu and Lakshadweep is part of Kerala state committee. National Capital Territory of Delhi has a separate state unit. Out of the 26 state committees, Andaman & Nicobar, Goa, Manipur and Sikkim are state organising committees. As per the Central Committee guidelines, those states which have 1,000 members or above can organise a state committee and those states which have less than 1,000 members are called state organising committees.

Serious efforts were made to improve the functioning of state centres, state secretariats and state committees. There is improvement in the functioning of most of the state committees. The reports from the state conferences show that the state committees met regularly once in two or three months and meetings of the state secretariats are held between state committee meetings. Written reports are submitted in all state committee meetings. The practice of holding meeting of available members of the state secretariat takes place in many states. In certain states, this does not happen regularly. It is the responsibility of the state committee secretary to hold such meetings. In some states, sufficient number of state secretariat members are not available at the state centre and mass organisation centres. Efforts should be continued to strengthen the state and mass organisation centres.

The expansion of the Party in weaker states, to a great extent, depends on the expansion of the mass organisations and their activities. Certain state committees do not give sufficient attention for building mass organisations. Regular review of the functioning of the mass organisations does not take place in many state committees. A timetable should be fixed to review the activities of the mass organisations periodically. The national campaign during August 2006 was organised by all state committees in an effective manner by mobilizing Party members and sympathizers. But some of the political campaigns were organised in some state committees in a routine manner and the strength of the Party was not appropriately mobilized to make the campaign a success.

There is also weakness in certain committees in taking up the local issues, immediate issues for organising agitations and struggles.

Flow of Information

The flow of information from top to bottom and bottom to top should be strengthened for the collective functioning of the Party. All Central Committee decisions and reports are explained in state committees either by PB or CC members. There is weakness in explaining the Central Committee and state committee reports and decisions to the lower committees. After every Central Committee and state committee meeting, Party committees, at various levels, should assess how many committees and Party members are covered. Many CC documents were not reported to committees and Party members in many places.

The branches and Party committees should send their reports immediately after their meeting to the next higher committee for its consideration. The state committees should send their reports regularly to the Central Committee immediately after their meeting.

Currently, state reports are received at the Centre only on the eve of the Central Committee meetings. The weaknesses in the reporting from top to bottom and bottom to top should be concretely identified and rectified for strengthening the collective and efficient functioning of the Party.

Cadre

Since the 1967 CC document, “Our Task on Party Organisation”, the Party has been continuously stressing the implementation of a correct and well-defined cadre policy for Party building and for expansion of the Party. The Party needs adequate number of cadre at all levels of the Party, mass organisations, institutions and bodies such as state governments, parliament, state legislative assemblies, local bodies, cooperatives, etc. The Party is facing shortage of adequate number of equipped cadre at different areas. Sufficient number of cadre have to be recruited, given appropriate training, deployed in various activities, guided collectively, their activities monitored and they should be promoted on the basis of merit and contribution. The Party needs adequate number of full time cadre because without full time cadre, various activities on different fronts cannot be efficiently carried out only on the basis of part-time functionaries however much their number may be. If the work has to be stable and planned and even to allot and check-up the work among the part-time functionaries, it is essential that the Party should have sufficient number of full time cadre.

The 18th Congress came to the conclusion that one of the reasons for the slowdown of the implementation of the expansion plan of the Party was the inadequacy in deploying cadre for implementation of the new tasks. After reviewing the situation, the 18th Congress came to the following conclusions:

1. The Party should recruit young cadre from states and districts and deploy them in areas where the Party is weak.
2. Special attention should be given to recruit cadre from women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities.
3. The selection and promotion of cadre should be strictly on the basis of his/her political organisational capacity and performance.
4. The state committees should make appropriate arrangements for ensuring payment of wages and allowances taking into consideration the minimum livelihood requirements.
5. The All India Party Centre should help those state committees which do not have sufficient resources to pay wages for efficient cadre.
6. The PB and CC should prepare guidelines explaining the aspects of cadre recruitment, deployment, monitoring their work, promotion, education, payment of wages, etc.

On the basis of the direction of the Party Congress, the Central Committee issued guidelines in December 2005. The PB members and CC members who are in-charge of the state committees discussed these aspects in state committees and took certain decisions. The meeting of the secretaries of the Hindi-speaking states discussed this matter and decisions were taken to increase the number of wholetimers and their wages.

In many states, decisions were taken to increase the wages of full time cadre working at the state level and certain states have started implementing them. Special fund collection calls were given in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, etc., for collecting funds for payment of wages to wholetimers. It is also a fact that certain state committees have not fully implemented the decisions. Though decisions have been taken to discuss these aspects in districts, they have not been implemented

in many districts. Each state committee should discuss the issue of wholetimers and should make appropriate arrangements for payment of wages. More cadres, particularly young cadres, have to be selected and should be allotted work in Party and mass fronts. Special attention should be given to recruit cadre from women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities. Cadre, at all levels, should be allotted specific work and their performance should be periodically evaluated. Appropriate arrangements should be made for giving political education to the cadre.

Political Education

At the all-India level, 10 Party schools were organised during this period. Classes were organised for women cadre, classes in two phases for teachers in Hindi region, for CC units, state leadership, youth cadre, student cadre, trade union leaders and college and school teachers. 850 comrades participated in all these classes and the duration of the classes ranged from three to six days. This is for the first time that the Party Centre has organised ten Party schools for different sections of cadre and leaders during an intervening period between two Party Congresses. The Party Centre also published four notes on different subjects.

Many state committees have organised political education programmes for teachers, cadre and Party members. In Kerala, EMS Academy organises regular classes for Party cadre. In Andhra Pradesh, a permanent school for political education is organised from Sundarayya Vigyana Kendra. About 9,600 comrades were given political education classes during this period. The West Bengal state committee has organised classes at different levels during this period. Most of the classes were organised at district and lower level. The Tripura state committee organised classes at different levels. Apart from organising classes at local level, Tamilnadu state committee gave special emphasis for developing reading habits among comrades through organising libraries. During this period, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Orissa, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Delhi and Karnataka have organised state level classes. States like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are lagging behind in fulfilling this task. Most of the state committees have organised classes for student comrades at least once in a year during this period.

The composition of the Party members with regard to their year of joining the Party shows that 34.15 per cent of Party members have joined the Party after 2002. The higher percentage of Party members joined after 2002 highlights the importance of providing political and organisational education to them. The review reports and the discussions in many state conferences show that the attendance in political classes is only about 50 per cent of the Party membership. This means half of the Party members are not covered. The attendance in political education classes should be insisted as one of the requirements for renewal of Party membership. Many of the weaknesses and wrong practices continuing and gaining strength in the Party is because of weaknesses in giving political and organisational education to Party members.

The experience shows that different types of problems exist in different states. Some states do not prepare proper plans for organising classes. Some Party committees find it difficult to set apart time to organise classes. In some places, education sub-committees are not properly functioning. There is a shortage of teachers on certain

subjects in some states. Certain committees are facing financial problems in organising classes.

The experience underlines the need for making yearly plans by all state committees well in advance for giving political education to the cadre and Party members. Political education should be made an integral part of the Party's important activities. In order to find solutions to the problems of shortage of teachers, teachers' training classes should be organised.

Joint Efforts for Expansion of the Movement in Neighbouring Areas

The 18th Congress decided that the stronger states can supplement the efforts of the Polit Bureau in helping the neighbouring states in their efforts for expansion. Certain efforts have been done in this direction after the Party Congress. The West Bengal state committee is helping the Party and mass organisations in Sikkim and Andaman & Nicobar. Comrades from West Bengal regularly attend the meetings of the Party and mass organisations in these states. Border committees between West Bengal and Jharkhand have been constituted for coordinating the efforts for expansion in the adjoining districts. Nine districts of Jharkhand adjoin six districts of West Bengal. 18 blocks have been earmarked for initial work. Border committees have been constituted between West Bengal and Bihar and they are functioning. A border committee has been constituted between West Bengal and Orissa and started functioning from the middle of 2006. Six working groups have been working in Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts in Orissa. Comrades from West Midnapore and East Midnapore districts in West Bengal are helping the comrades in Orissa. Tripura state committee and Assam state committee have formed inter-state border committees and started functioning. Kerala state committee has taken initiative in organising a Party unit in Lakshadweep. The decision to implement border committees between Kerala and Karnataka is yet to be implemented.

The formation of inter-state border committees and joint work have helped in strengthening and expanding the work of the Party and mass organisations in the selected districts in Assam, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand. The experience of each border committee should be reviewed and yearly plans should be made for implementation.

ALL INDIA CAMPAIGNS AND LOCAL STRUGGLES

All India Campaigns

The Party organised many national level campaigns and activities on certain important political and economic issues. These campaigns and activities have enhanced the prestige of the Party among common people and have helped in projecting Party's views among wider sections of the people.

Other than the national level campaigns organised by the Party, the Party observed 75th anniversary of the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, 60th anniversary of victory over fascism, 150th anniversary of the 1857 struggle for independence, and 30th anniversary

of the West Bengal Left Front government. In many parts of the country, public meetings, seminars and symposiums were organised.

Agitations and Struggles on Local Issues

The 18th Congress directed the Party to take up local issues, immediate issues and partial demands and organise agitations and struggles in a sustained manner for expansion of the Party. The Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan state committees successfully implemented the directive of the Party Congress. This enabled the Party and mass fronts to reach to wider sections of people. The attempts made in other states have not achieved any noticeable impact. It is also a fact that certain state committees and district committees have not given adequate importance to organise agitations and struggles on local or immediate issues. Some of these committees took up issues in a routine manner.

Under the leadership of the Party and 195 mass organisations, a popular struggle was organised in many centres in Andhra Pradesh for the distribution of house sites and cultivable land to the rural and urban poor. The movement spread to more than 3,280 centres in 100 towns and 800 mandals (tehsils). 3,25,000 acres of land, including house sites, was occupied at the time of the struggle. 80,000 people were arrested and cases were taken against 20,000 comrades, including 5,000 women. The police lathi-charged in more than 1,000 centres and many thousands were injured. Seven people were shot dead in police firing at Mudigonda in Khammam district. More than 5,000, including 700 women, were sent to jail. All India Party and mass organisation leaders participated in the struggle in many places. This has helped to project the land issue at the state level.

The state committee also took up social issues, issues of all-round development of the districts, issues of the common people in urban centres and organised agitations and struggles. The Party committee and agricultural workers front have actively intervened in the implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The issues of the minorities were also taken up, particularly in Hyderabad. All these activities helped the Party and mass fronts to reach newer sections of people.

The struggle for water supply and for reduction of increased electricity charges in Rajasthan attained mass character. For eight days, about 50,000 farmers participated in the massive sit-in programme. The state government was forced to concede most of the demands of the common people. The struggle has helped the expansion of the Party and mass fronts in Bikaner, Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Sikar and certain other districts in Rajasthan.

There are innumerable issues affecting the people at the local, district, state levels in every state. Wherever the Party has taken up such issues, there the Party has been able to strengthen its influence. Party should take up such issues and organise agitations and struggles in a sustained manner. Widest possible propaganda should be organised. Without taking up the immediate issues, partial demands and organised agitations and struggles, it is not possible to reach wider sections of people who are so far not attached to the Party.

Some Party committees and comrades are showing apathy in taking up issues related to social oppression. Such wrong attitude should be corrected and Party at all levels should take up all issues related to social oppression. The people who are affected by social oppression should feel through experience that the Party and the mass fronts genuinely fight for their cause.

Experiences Summed Up

The Party made efforts to improve the quality of Party membership by tightening the recruitment of Party members, giving political-organisational education to the members, allocating Party members in different class and mass organisations, activating branches and committees at different levels, organising more all-India campaigns and local struggles. There is slight improvement in the quality of Party members in many states. But the level of improvement varies from state to state and also from district to district. In some places, no serious attempts were made. Party has to continue the efforts to improve the quality of Party members, so that they will be capable of discharging their responsibilities.

Worker-Peasant Unity

The Party has been reiterating that the core and basis of the people's democratic front is the firm alliance of the working class and peasantry and the alliance is the most important force in defending national independence, accomplishing far-reaching democratic transformation and ensuring all-round social progress. It has also been stated that the role of other classes in carrying out the revolution also depends on the strength and stability of the worker-peasant alliance.

Some initiative has been taken during this period in this direction. Leaders of the TU front, kisan front and agricultural workers front met and identified certain issues on which joint actions are possible.

An All India Convention of workers, peasants and agricultural workers was convened on August 31, 2007, in New Delhi. The convention identified ten issues for countrywide joint campaign. They are: checking rise in prices of essential commodities, strengthening of PDS, pressing for passing a central legislation for unorganised labour and agricultural workers, effective implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, increase in tariff rates, make ICDS and regularise anganwadi workers, give cheap institutional credit, distribution of land, implementation of labour laws and minimum wages, amendment of SEZ Act and Rules.

State-level conventions were held in many states and state level coordination committees were formed. Due to Party conferences and other programmes, district demonstrations and demonstrations at state headquarters were postponed. The initiative taken in building worker-peasant unity by taking joint issues at the mass organisational level should be carried forward as an important task in the future.

Workshop on Self Help Groups

As decided by the 18th Congress, a workshop on Self Help Groups was held at Hyderabad in February 2007. A note broadly explaining the experience and policy of the Party on Self Help Groups was presented in the workshop. On the basis of the discussion in the workshop, the document was finalised explaining our approach and guidelines.

Agit-Prop Work

The agit-prop committee of eight members, functioning from the Centre, has met regularly, holding eleven meetings during this period. The work of the committee consisted of:

- Providing material to the states for all Party campaigns
- Publishing booklets on important topics
- Publishing Party documents.

Notes in the form of talking points on some topical issues were also made available to the state committees. The big attack on the Party on the Nandigram and earlier on the Singur issues required material to be sent to the states. Two pamphlets and three sets of talking points on different occasions were prepared with the help of the West Bengal state committee. On the Indo-US nuclear deal, to meet the disinformation campaign unleashed by the corporate media, a set of five folders and two booklets were issued. For the two big Party campaigns—in August 2005 and February 2007—seven folders on issues like price rise, PDS, land reforms, unemployment, disinvestment were issued.

21 booklets were published on various topics such as food security and BPL, Sachar Committee, OBC reservation, Gujarat communal offensive, two booklets on Left Front governments, approach to SEZs, globalisation and socialism, imperialism.

Two Marxist classics—Lenin's *Imperialism* and Engels' *Origins of Family, Private Property and State*—were published in Hindi.

However, the main problem and weakness has been the inability to bring out the sufficient literature in Hindi and Urdu. At present, the practice is to farm out the work of translation to different Hindi-speaking states which is not a satisfactory arrangement. It is essential to recruit trained cadre for this purpose who will be permanently posted at the Centre. More pamphlets on common issues affecting the Hindi-speaking states can also be brought out with the cooperation of the states.

The feedback from the states has been absent, although from state reports it appears that the material has been used and translated by various states in different languages. Unfortunately, the dues are also quite high.

Circulation Drive for Central Party Papers

After the 18th Congress, a serious effort was made to increase the circulation of *People's Democracy*, *Loklahar* and *The Marxist*.

The circulation of *People's Democracy* and *Loklahar* increased during this period. *People's Democracy* increased its circulation from 13,049 in 2005–06 to 25,733 in 2007–08. The circulation of *Loklahar* increased from 10,954 to 12,968 during the same period. The circulation of *People's Democracy* in Kerala increased substantially after starting the Kochi edition and it went up to 10,075. West Bengal stands second with a circulation of 8,335. *Loklahar* circulation increased marginally in many states. There is slight decline in the circulation of *The Marxist* and the Urdu monthly, *Shabtaab*.

More importantly, the quality of ideological and political content of *People's Democracy* and *Loklahar* have gone up along with growth of interest of non-Party people in our papers. In three years, both *People's Democracy* and *Loklahar* have regularly brought out special issues. More important among them are:

- On 40th anniversary of *People's Democracy* (June, 2005)
- On Republic Day (2006 and 2007)
- On 1857 (May, 2007)
- On 30 years of Left Front government (June, 2007)
- On 60 years of independence (August, 2007)
- 90th anniversary of October Revolution (November, 2007)

The series of articles on 1857, that started with the 2007 Republic Day special number concluded with 90th anniversary of October Revolution number, has also made its mark as the Left's further contribution to understanding the great anti-colonial revolt. Efforts should be continued to further improve the quality of the Party organs. The style and language of *Loklahar* should be made more popular.

Efforts have been made to make *People's Democracy* and *Loklahar* financially self-sufficient. The efforts should be continued. There is need to streamline the managerial section of the *People's Democracy/Loklahar*, CPI(M) Publications.

After the Party Congress, a campaign for increasing the circulation of *People's Democracy*, *Loklahar*, *The Marxist* and *Shabtaab* should be organised.

INN: The contribution from INN is minimal. The work of the INN should be streamlined and strengthened.

Party Organs in States

There is expansion and strengthening of the Party organs in some states and other propaganda materials.

Kerala: *Deshabhimani* is published from six centres. Two weeklies—political weekly *Chintha* and cultural weekly *Deshabhimani Weekly*—are published regularly. AKG Study and Research Centre publishes a quarterly, *Marxist Samvadam*. A children's monthly, *Thathamma*, has a present circulation of about 27,000. The circulation went up to one lakh and declined. The Chintha Publishing Centre publishes Marxist, Left and progressive books.

West Bengal: *Ganashakti* is published from three centres. The Bengali weekly *Desh Hitaishree*, Hindi weekly *Swadhinta* and Urdu daily *Abshar* are published regularly. Cultural monthly *Nandan* is regularly published in Bengali. *Marxbadipath*, a theoretical quarterly, is published in Bengali. The National Book Agency publishes Marxist, Left and progressive books.

Andhra Pradesh: *Prajashakti* is published from nine centres. A theoretical monthly *Marxistu* is published regularly. Prajashakti Publishing House publishes Marxist, Left and progressive books.

Tripura: *Desharkatha Daily*, organ of the Party, is published from Agartala. *Purbabhas*, a progressive cultural journal, is published regularly.

Tamilnadu: *Theekkathir*, Tamil daily, is published from three centres. A theoretical monthly *Marxist* and a cultural monthly *Semmalar* are being published regularly in Tamil. The publication house, Bharathi Puthakalayam, publishes Marxist, Left and progressive books.

The weeklies—*Jeevanmarg* in Maharashtra, *Ganashakti* in Assam, *Janashakthi* in Karnataka, *Samyabadi* in Orissa—and fortnightly—*Lok Samvad* in Uttar Pradesh, *Lok Jatan* in Madhya Pradesh, *Chintan* in Gujarat, *Lok Janvad* in Bihar—are being regularly published.

All Party organs should upgrade their professional skills to meet the present requirements.

Leftword Books

Leftword Books has been publishing a range of titles including Marxist classics and books on contemporary issues.

Party Fund Collection

The Central Committee gave a call for fund collection in 2005. The Party Centre received Rs. 27,20,000 from states. Andaman & Nicobar, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim state committees have not paid any amount to the Central Party fund.

There is some improvement in collecting funds for meeting the expenditure for the activities of the Party and for paying wages to whole timers in states. If fund collection is properly organised and if the Party is active in taking up the issues of the common people, there will not be much difficulty in generating sufficient fund for the activities of the Party. After the struggles in Rajasthan, the Party fund collection exceeded Rs. 12 lakhs from three districts. Wherever fund collection was properly organised, the common people generously contributed to the Party fund. But some committees do not organise Party fund collection regularly in a planned manner. Stress should be given to collect funds from the common people and involving the entire Party in fund collection.

Kerala state committee had given four important fund collection calls during this period. Party members, including leaders, visited houses and shops and collected Rs. 6,36,76,437 in two days for constructing a memorial for E.K. Nayanar, Rs. 87,45,233 as Palestinian relief fund, Rs. 76,93,621.50 as relief to Andhra land struggle comrades and Rs. 7,93,13,880 to help the families of martyrs, old and ailing comrades and the family members of Party members in jails.

Palestine Relief Fund

In solidarity with the Palestinian people, the Central Committee gave a call to raise funds for the aiding people in Palestine. The Party Centre received an amount of Rs. 1,36,70,201.

Maintenance of Accounts

As per the provisions of the Rules under the Party Constitution, state committees, district committees and intermediate committees should constitute finance sub-committees for maintenance of accounts and disbursement of money. The sub-committees should submit six-monthly account to the Party committee and such statement should be forwarded to the next higher committee. Annual accounts should be audited by the sub-committee and placed before the Party committee for approval. This does not regularly take place in the case of many committees. The Rules under the Party Constitution were amended in December 2005. The Rules instructed the district committees to submit its and all the lower elected committees' consolidated statement of account duly audited by a chartered accountant to the state committee before July 31 every year. The state committee should submit the consolidated statement of account of its and all the lower elected committees before August 31 every year to the Central Committee after being duly audited by a chartered accountant. In many states, the practice of presenting six-monthly accounts and annual accounts does not take place. At least in certain committees, there are complaints about the misuse of Party funds. The state committees should ensure the implementation of the Rules under the Party Constitution.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND COLLECTIVE FUNCTIONING

The 18th Congress decided that democratic centralism and collective functioning at all levels should be strengthened. Party can be effective and discharge its multifarious tasks only when the principle of collective decision making and implementation are followed.

Collective functioning can be strengthened only on the basis of constant common activity of the Party members and of the entire Party organisations. Party organisational principles do not allow the presence of division among the Party members as active Party members and inactive Party members. This situation may foment many wrong tendencies such as federalism, factionalism, careerism, sycophancy, bureaucratism, etc. The Party should overcome the situation by systematic and continuous political and organisational education work, streamlining the Party organisation and weeding out the incorrigibles.

The existence of inactive branches, committees, functionaries and members weaken cohesion and collective functioning. State reports indicate the presence of a considerable number of inactive Party members, branches and committees. The situation varies from state to state and district to district. Serious efforts should be made to remedy the situation.

There are other shortcomings and weaknesses at different levels. In some committees, free and frank discussions do not take place. In certain places, the secretary or an important comrade in that committee takes important decisions and imposes it on others. In some other cases, the secretariat takes decisions and the larger committee is not involved. Members in certain committees have complained that they have no right to discuss or decide matters but they have only the responsibility to execute the decisions. Certain secretaries, at different levels, believe that they are empowered to take decisions individually and the responsibility of others is to execute the decisions. If members question the secretary or other important comrades, they behave vindictively. If the secretariat or the secretary has to tackle some urgent routine matters, they have to report such action in the next immediate meeting and should obtain approval. It is the responsibility of the secretary or the secretariat to ensure collective discussion, decision making and implementation.

In order to strengthen the democratic nature of the Party, the Party Constitution stipulates for encouraging criticism and self-criticism at all levels and especially criticism from below. Party Centre has received certain complaints about vindictive action from certain comrades when criticisms were raised against them. There are also instances of raising unverified wild allegations. In some committees, when some comrades raise an inconvenient issue or question or any matter disliked by leaders, the comrades who raise such issues or questions are snubbed by the leadership. The wrong practice of interrupting speeches by raising irrelevant questions in order to stifle criticism can be seen in the case of certain committees. All such wrong practices should be strictly avoided.

Bureaucratic tendencies hinder collective work in the Party. Efforts must be made to strengthen Party spirit by developing fraternal relations among Party members.

Different types of violations of democratic centralism were seen in different states. Disciplinary actions were taken against certain Party members who worked against Party candidates at different level elections. In a few places, some Party members stood as rebel candidates against the Party candidates. In Kerala, certain Party members took part in demonstrations against the Party decision on candidates in Assembly elections. Disciplinary actions were taken against the Party members who violated Party discipline.

Factionalism and factional groupings inside the Party in any form is impermissible. Factional tendencies encourage federal tendencies and both will weaken collective functioning of the Party. As we decided in the 18th Congress, the Party has to fight and eradicate all factional and federal tendencies in the Party in order to strengthen democratic centralism and collective functioning.

Any rivalry for power or any contest for supremacy within the Party is not compatible with the fundamental principles of democratic centralism and cannot be allowed in any form.

The present situation demands stern action to curb factional tendencies. Factionalism promotes all sorts of unhealthy trends and practices within the Party.

Certain Organisational Issues in States

Kerala

The 18th Congress gave specific directions to the Kerala Party to continue its fight against factional tendencies and to unify the Party at all levels.

It reminded the Party leadership in Kerala of its responsibility in this regard and asked them collectively and individually to seriously introspect about all deviations—political, ideological and organisational—in their functioning and change and fall in line with the Party positions. The Party leaders should not make any public utterances expressing their differences either implicitly or explicitly. Serious political, ideological and organisational education should be conducted inside the Party. The democratic and collective functioning of the PC secretariat and the PC should be strengthened. The Party Congress also expressed its serious concern at the persisting disunity and factional tendencies in Kerala and directed the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee to take appropriate steps to eradicate factionalism and to strengthen unity of the Party in Kerala.

The CC document, ‘Report on Implementation of Organisational Tasks’ reviewed the steps taken by the PB to help the Kerala Party in their fight to eliminate the factional tendencies and their efforts to unify the Party at all levels and gave further directions.

The Polit Bureau made five important interventions during the intervening period. They are:

- Helping the PC in reviewing the state conference and taking decisions on all related issues.
- At the time of legislative assembly elections in Kerala, in the case of electoral tactics, selection of candidates and formation of the government.
- When controversies arose on ADB loan issue, anti-piracy cell issue, SNC Lavlin case, etc.
- At the time when complaints came about raising deposits for *Deshabhimani* and arranging sponsorship for E.K. Nayanar memorial football match.
- During the Party conferences.

The Polit Bureau meeting held on July 29–30, 2005, made a detailed review of the Kerala state conference held at Malappuram before the 18th Congress and all connected issues. It pinpointed the factional moves in the conference whereby 12 comrades contested against the panel which was decided by the outgoing state committee with the help of the Polit Bureau. It suggested steps to correct these comrades and eliminate factional tendencies.

After the PB meeting, the meeting of the Kerala state secretariat and state committee was held and the PB decisions explained. The PB decision was also reported by General Secretary Prakash Karat to the district committee members, area committee members and local committee secretaries in the state in three regional meetings in Kozhikkode, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram.

The PB had to intervene during the legislative assembly elections in Kerala. The PB advised the state Party that the Party should not enter into any understanding with Karunakaran's DIC(K) and contest the elections as the Left Democratic Front. After the Central Committee meeting in March 2006, the PB met and decided that both V. S. Achuthanandan and Pinarayi Vijayan need not contest in the assembly elections. Before the PB meeting, a meeting of the Central Committee members from Kerala was called and their views were heard by the PB. Both V.S. Achuthanandan and Pinarayi Vijayan said in the PB that they do not want to contest. The PB also decided that the state committee should decide the leader of the team. This decision was conveyed to the state secretariat and state committee meetings. After the state committee meeting, some Party district committees and lower committees sent letters to the Party Centre that the decision not to field VS as a candidate had created confusion among Party members and sympathisers and it would adversely affect the Party's election prospects. Many supporters and individuals also sent letters to the Party Centre on similar lines. There was a concerted propaganda by the media that the Party had unjustifiably denied candidature to V.S. Achuthanandan. All these contributed to confusion on this issue among the Party members, sympathisers and the general public.

An urgent meeting of the Polit Bureau was called on March 21 in New Delhi to discuss the Kerala situation and to take an appropriate decision. The PB decided that in the present situation, it would be better that both V.S. Achuthanandan and Pinarayi Vijayan should contest in the elections as the earlier decision had created confusion and that might adversely affect the election prospects. During the discussions, V.S. Achuthanandan said that he was changing his earlier view and he was willing to contest. Pinarayi Vijayan said that he was not changing his views and he would not contest. The PB reversed its earlier decision and decided that V.S. Achuthanandan should contest. It was also decided that the issue of Chief Minister will be decided after the elections. The PB also pointed out that V.S. Achuthanandan should have issued a statement when the media attacked the Party and demonstrations were organised against Party decisions. The decision of the PB was conveyed to the state secretariat and state committee.

Both the decisions not to associate with the DIC(K) and the revised decision to allow V.S. Achuthanandan to contest the elections were helpful in the Party's and the LDF's success in the assembly elections.

The PB subsequently decided that V.S. Achuthanandan should lead the cabinet as Chief Minister. The PB also assisted in the portfolio allocation.

When controversies on ADB loan, removal of an IG from the anti-piracy cell and the SNC Lavlin case came up, the Polit Bureau gave its views on such matters and explained it in the state committee. The PB also conveyed its serious concern about

the manner in which the LDF government was functioning. The PB directed that a five-member committee consisting of Pinarayi Vijayan, V.S. Achuthanandan, P.K. Gurudasan, Kodyeri Balakrishnan and Vaikom Viswan (LDF convenor) should be constituted and meet regularly to discuss government-Party matters. It was also pointed out that the state secretariat need not take up routine matters of government but only major policy issues and important questions regarding the government.

The PB members were present and helped the Kerala state secretariat and state committee to arrive at decisions regarding taking deposits for *Deshabhimani* and accepting sponsorship to the international football match organised at the initiative of the Kannur district committee of the Party in the name of E.K. Nayanar.

All India Party Centre received many complaints and appeals against disciplinary actions taken against comrades by different Party units in Kerala on the eve of the Party conferences. All these complaints and appeals were handed over to the state committee for their consideration. In the secretariat meeting, a committee consisting of three state secretariat members was constituted to go into the complaints and appeals and submit its report. The committee examined the complaints and appeals and submitted its report. Based on the report of the committee and the PB's suggestions, all the cases were disposed off. In 44 cases, membership was restored or the punishment reduced.

Before the Party conferences, along with the general guidelines adopted for holding Party conferences, a set of additional guidelines were adopted for the conduct of conferences in Kerala.

The Polit Bureau got the reports of the branch, local committee and area committee conferences. In the secretariat, after a review, some conferences were cancelled and certain conferences were reconvened for re-electing committees or delegations to the higher conferences.

The Central Committee also authorised the Polit Bureau to take all appropriate intervention in the conduct of the conferences at all levels in Kerala to ensure that the conference take place in a proper manner.

At the level of the district conferences, in 12 out of the 14 districts, conferences were held smoothly as per the norms. There were complaints from two districts—Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam.

The special guidelines prepared by the Central Committee for conducting Kerala conference have helped in containing factionalism in conferences in Kerala. There are also complaints that the guidelines were misused for factional purposes at certain places. All such complaints should be considered and appropriate corrective action should be taken for eliminating factional tendencies and to unify the Party.

The state committee has made serious efforts to fight factionalism and registered progress. The recent state conference in Kottayam was held in a different atmosphere from that of the last state conference in Malappuram. The work report, panel for the state committee, delegates panel to the Party Congress, panel of members of the state control commission—all were adopted unanimously. Though there were overtones of

factionalism in the speeches of some comrades in the state conference, overall there was a distinct improvement. Sustained efforts are necessary to fight factional tendencies and to strengthen democratic centralism in the Party.

The state committee should continue its efforts to fight factional tendencies to unify the Party and to improve collective functioning. The two PB members—V.S. Achuthanandan (Chief Minister of the LDF government) and Pinarayi Vijayan (state secretary of the Party)—and the CC members should realize their great responsibility in unifying the Party in Kerala. All wrong acts, practices and tendencies should be objectively assessed and immediate corrective steps should be taken. The state leadership, through their collective and deft handling of the numerous issues—should ensure that the comrades come out of their factional leanings. No vindictive action should be allowed at any level. If unity of the Party is strengthened, the Party in Kerala will have big success in expanding the Party among different sections of people.

General Secretary Prakash Karat and PB members S. Ramachandran Pillai and R. Umanath attended a large number of meetings of the Kerala state committee during this period. PB member Sitaram Yechury also attended some of the state committee meetings.

Punjab

A considerable section of Party members who had gone out of the Party have come back and joined the Party and mass fronts due to the efforts of the state leadership. But some differences among the Central Committee members on assessment of cadre and on certain organisational matters are creating difficulties in the collective work of the state secretariat and state committee. Factional tendencies are seen in certain districts. The Party Centre intervened to resolve certain organisational problems. The CC members should make collective efforts to solve all organisational problems and to unify the Party. The leadership should ensure that organisational norms are followed at all levels. Party and mass front centres and collective work should be strengthened. A serious political-organisational education should be conducted covering all Party committees, branches and Party members.

Rectification Campaign

The Party has been continuously stressing the importance of conducting a rectification campaign to eradicate all violations of organisational principles and streamline the Party at all levels. It has also been pointed out that all violations of Communist norms should be pinned down and fought against. This is not a one time affair and efforts have to be made continuously.

The reviews made by the Party committees and state conferences show the need for more determined efforts to fight the growing wrong trends and practices. The Central Committee document, 'On Rectification Campaign', adopted on October 29–31, 1996, pointed out the circumstances that provide grounds for penetrating alien class values and practices within the Party. In India, the peasantry and the petty-bourgeois sections are a predominant part of society and the Party works in a bourgeois and semi-feudal environment. In such a situation, it is possible that alien class values and habits constantly penetrate the Party.

The reports from different states show that disciplinary actions were taken against corrupt Party members. There are some reports that Party members collected amounts from shady characters and tainted persons. The 18th Congress had cautioned that Party should not accept funds from such persons. The case of a manager in *Deshabhimani* taking a bribe of rupees one crore shows how corrupt degeneration can creep in. The Andhra Pradesh state conference report has pinpointed the alien trends in Khammam district Party leadership. This includes collection of money and bourgeois lifestyle.

There are also complaints that the assets of certain Party members are disproportionate to their known source of income. Party had already issued guidelines that Party leaders and mass organisation leaders should submit a statement of income and assets to the concerned Party committees along with the membership renewal form. This practice should be extended up to the local committee level and functionaries of the mass organisation at the all-India, state, district and the office-bearers of the trade unions. Though the statements of income are filed, the assessment of the statement by the appropriate Party committee is not taking place. The Party committees should collectively consider the statements and appropriate remedial action should be taken.

Some Party cadre follow caste and religious practices. There are complaints about some Party members practising dowry system. Some Party members organise ostentatious parties in connection with birthdays, marriages, construction of new houses, etc. The Kerala organisational review had noted such trends. The Party had already issued guidelines that leading Party functionaries and elected representatives should adopt a simple lifestyle. They should not host lavish weddings for their family members, relatives and should refrain from taking dowry. They should not organise religious ceremonies or personally conduct religious rituals. Party committees should ensure that Party members should refrain from such temptations of the present bourgeois-semi feudal order. Party members should not accept any hospitality provided by companies and private lobbies. This will include dinners/lunches, expensive gifts, hotel stay, discounts in prices for buying costly gifts. Guidelines about Party members doing business and contractors work being excluded from Party committees and key positions should be worked out.

There are a few reports that in some Party conferences, corrupt practices were used to capture Party position in certain places. All such complaints should be considered seriously and stern disciplinary action should be taken against all wrong-doers. Such violations should not be treated lightly by the concerned Party committees.

The Political-Organisational Report of Andhra Pradesh states: "Consumerism is influencing the Party also. The tendency to live a lavish life is also getting strengthened. The lifestyle of some leaders and cadre is incompatible with expected lifestyle of Communists. They are getting attracted to pomp and bourgeois tendencies. We should understand that people will not relish such tendencies in Communists. We have to keep away from them. The cases of financial irregularities are increasing. We have to deal firmly with these tendencies. Alien influences will have to be corrected with working class outlook. Rectification movement has to be conducted."

The Political-Organisational Report of West Bengal states: “The social ambience in which the Party workers live is marked by self-centeredness, greed, jealousy, consumerism, etc. The philosophy of globalization has helped such traits to gain currency more and more. The State power continues to utilize such weaknesses as a means of ‘peaceful’ exploitation by subjugating protest. The Communist morality of the Party workers is under attack through enticement of different forms.”

The Party’s revolutionary character and the maintenance of Communist norms and morality must be accorded high priority. The new Central Committee must initiate a full-fledged rectification campaign at all levels of the Party.

Party and Mass Organisations

The Party Congress documents and the Central Committee documents have been insisting on the implementation of the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the interrelationship between Party and mass organisations. The 1981 Central Committee document, ‘On Mass Organisations’ explained the correct approach of the Party to mass organisations. The 2004 Central Committee document, ‘On Approach to Mass Organisations’ reviewed the experiences of the implementation of the 1981 document and pointed out the present tasks.

The present situation shows that the trade unions, kisan sabha, agricultural workers’ union where the Party members work, are still limited amongst a small section of the basic classes. The same situation applies to the youth, student and women organisations with a few exceptions. The other organised sections are divided on political, communal and caste basis in different mass organisations. Most of the political parties, communal and caste organisations treat the mass organisations as their appendages for electoral gains and support base. In certain areas, NGOs are also trying to organise the masses. A large section of the masses in the country are unorganised. Our class and mass organisations should aim to reach the masses who are unorganised and who are rallied under different political parties, caste and communal organisations and NGOs. We stand for uniting the classes and other sections of people on the basis of their genuine issues and demands.

The expansion of the Party depends on our success in rallying these classes and masses who are unorganised or organised and affiliated to other political parties, caste or communal organisations. The political slogans we raise are unable to rouse the backward masses immediately. The backward masses are attracted immediately on the basis of their immediate demands, partial demands which are or appear to be achievable. The mass organisations should play the role of rousing their elementary consciousness—the consciousness of accepting the need to unite and to fight for their immediate issues. Those who are qualified to attain this elementary consciousness should be rallied in class and mass organisations. The masses will gain experience and training and their consciousness will be raised continuously through the activities of mass organisations and through the intervention of the Party members working in these mass organisations.

The Party, through the Party members, should consistently raise the consciousness of the masses and also try to reach the backward section through the work of the mass organisations. The Party can reach the non-Party masses mainly through the activities

of the mass organisations. Only a small section whose political consciousness is relatively high can immediately be attracted by political propaganda. That is why the 2004 Central Committee document stated that any breakthrough in the weaker states depends on the work in the class and mass organisations in a manner whereby the wider sections of the people are brought within their fold and activities.

Though the need for developing the independent functioning of the mass organisations, so that they acquire a broad character and help to reach new sections of the people, has been pointed out again and again, the tendency of treating class and mass organisations as “adjuncts” of the Party persists in many states. This situation keeps the class and mass organisation confined to the periphery of the Party members and sympathisers. In many places, mass organisations do not make serious efforts to take up local issues, immediate issues, partial issues and organise agitations and struggles. They routinely try to carry out the decisions of the higher committees as a ritual.

As instructed in the Party Constitution, all Party members should work in a mass organisation unless exempted by the Party. The Party members should devotedly serve the masses and consistently strengthen their bonds with them to learn from the masses and report opinions and demands to the Party. Party branches and local committees should keep close link with the masses and should make concrete plans for expansion of the mass fronts among the unorganised sections and the organised sections under other political parties, caste and communal organisations. The efforts of certain NGOs which try to wean away the masses from the general democratic stream should be combated.

The Central Committee and state committees should periodically review the work of the Party members in each mass front and specific tasks should be concretized. At different levels, many wrong trends and practices which were pinned down in the 1981 CC document, ‘On Mass Organisations’, and 2004 CC document, ‘On Approach to Mass Organisations’ continue in many places. The Party committees at different levels should concretely review the present situation and appropriate corrective steps should be taken.

Party and Mass Organisation Membership

The mass organisation membership is 62.91 times more than the Party membership at the all-India level. West Bengal's mass organisation membership is 105.45 times more than the Party membership, Rajasthan's mass organisation membership is 99.89 times more than the Party membership, Jammu & Kashmir's mass organisation membership is 87.5 times more than the Party membership and Haryana's membership is 86.54 times more than the Party membership. In Jammu & Kashmir, there is expansion of the youth movement. In Haryana, there is an expansion of all mass organisations. Two aspects should be considered here. The high proportion of mass organisation membership to Party membership on the one side reflects the expansion of the Party and its influence among wider masses. In certain states, this high proportion reflects the weaknesses in consolidating the gains and Party building. Each state committee has to consider the situation concretely and appropriate tasks should be formulated.

Functioning of Elected Representatives

The Party has representatives in Parliament, state assemblies, different levels of local bodies, cooperative societies, boards, authorities, corporations, etc. At the Parliament level, Party Parliament Committee guides MPs under the direction of the Party Centre. At the state level, sub-committees or fraction committees are constituted to guide MLAs. Sub-committees or fraction committees should be constituted to guide and monitor the work of the members of the local bodies. In many places, there is no mechanism to guide or supervise the elected members. The complaints against elected members are ignored in many places.

Work of the Sub-Committees & Fraction Committees

The sub-committees and fraction committees meet regularly and all important issues are discussed.

TU sub-committee: The TU sub-committee met eleven times since the 18th Congress. It constituted fraction committees in railways, central government, state government, banks, insurance, anganwadi, pharmaceuticals, BSNL, nuclear power, defence, civil aviation, coal, steel, construction and oil sectors. Political classes for the important TU functionaries, CG employees, civil aviation were organised.

Agrarian sub-committee: The sub-committee met four times after the 18th Congress. The meetings discussed about the struggle in Rajasthan, fixing whole timers to strengthen the organisation, state-wide classes for Hindi area, all-India programmes and campaigns, agricultural workers union cadre classes were planned. A document reviewing the work of the agricultural workers union was discussed.

Women's fraction committee: The fraction committee was constituted in August 2005. It met 7 times. The meetings discussed the functioning of state level fraction committees, tasks emerging out of the CC document, 'On Party's Perspective on Women's Issues and Tasks', recruitment and promotion of women Party members, functioning of the women's front Centre and women's front's approach to work among Muslim women etc. were discussed.

Youth fraction committee: The 18th Congress had decided that unlike in the past, the Party mechanism to guide Party's work in the youth and student fronts should be through youth and student fraction committees and not a youth-student sub-committee. The same pattern will be followed at the state level as well.

The youth fraction committee was constituted on the basis of the decisions of the 18th Congress. It discussed the observance of the 75th anniversary of Bhagat Singh's martyrdom, cadre of the all India centre and states and other programmes. The fraction committee collected information from states for preparing a youth policy document.

Student fraction committee: The meetings discussed the review of the SFI all-India conference, the direction and central thrust of the student movement, annual plan for student organisation, two central jathas in November 2006, etc. On the basis of the

information from the state committees, the fraction committee prepared a draft document, 'Student Front: Policy and Tasks'. The central secretariat member who is in-charge of the student front, Nilotpal Basu, visited states and held meetings of the state fraction committees.

Education sub-committee: Four full-fledged meetings were held. An extended meeting, including state education sub-committee in-charges, was held at Hyderabad in January 2006. The meetings planned central schools and reviewed the experience in states.

Tribal sub-committee: The tribal sub-committee has functioned regularly. Seven meetings of the tribal sub-committee and one extended meeting and one coordination committee meeting were held. A syllabus for education, specifically for tribal cadre, has also been discussed though not finalized.

States which have a substantial tribal population like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa have selected two tribal centres for concentrating work among the tribals and cadre were selected. The work among the tribals in these states is being reviewed periodically. The Party has been able to expand the work among tribals in certain selected areas. The work among the tribals has to be further strengthened. More cadres have to be identified and deputed for work among the tribals.

North East sub-committee: The sub-committee met 2 times after the 18th Congress. The meetings discussed how to develop the Party and mass organisations in the north-east region, setting up of inter-state border committees, etc.

After the 18th Congress two new committees were constituted, one on Muslim minorities and the other on dalit issues. The Muslim minorities committee held three meetings. After the Sachar committee report, the committee prepared a charter of demands based on its recommendations and submitted it to the PB for finalisation. It also planned an all India convention on the Sachar report's recommendations. The committee also monitored state conventions held in this regard. State conventions held in Chennai (Tamilnadu), Bangalore (Karnataka), Guwahati (Assam), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), Kozhikode (Kerala), Kolkata (West Bengal), Tripura, Mumbai (Maharashtra), Delhi, Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Bihar. Certain district level conventions were held in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. The committee has sought reports from the state about the Muslim organisations at work and their character and role. Mohammed Salim, CCM, is the convenor of this committee.

The dalit committee met twice in this period. A charter of demands on dalit issues was prepared. An all India convention was held on this charter. Reports of work among dalits in different states were collected. It was decided to hold a convention on Namashudra and other communities getting scheduled caste status.

Parliamentary sub-committee:

The parliamentary sub-committee has met regularly during Parliament sessions. Following the mid-term review of the Central Committee in September 2006, pre-session meetings are also now being held to ensure proper coordination, planning and

serving of notices on important issues to be taken up in both the houses. In both houses we were able to take up a number of issues affecting the people and issues concerning the UPA government's policies, communalism, foreign policy, etc. in line with our Party's understanding. Major debates in Parliament were helpful in articulating our Party's viewpoint, particularly on the Indo-US nuclear deal. On occasion we have been able to prevent the government from bringing in anti-people legislation and because of our intervention bills on the new pension scheme, banking reforms, FDI in various sectors like insurance, retail trade, etc., remain pending. As noted in the mid-term review, the performance in Lok Sabha where we have 44 MPs needs to be improved further as this is the house that attracts the attention of the people and more importantly in terms of representing the people's sovereignty in the parliamentary system.

A sub-committee of MPs has been formed to study all the bills and reports of the standing committees. This has helped in concretizing our comments to some of these bills.

The work in the standing committees of parliament has improved subsequent to the mid-term review. It still needs further improvement with our MPs paying more attention to record our views on various legislations and matters taken up in the committees. Dissenting notes, representing our points of view are being given by our members, but this needs to be further strengthened.

MPs' delegations have been visiting various states when major incidents of communal riots, attacks on minorities, terrorist attacks, national calamities, etc., have occurred. MPs' teams have also visited areas where popular struggles and attacks by the authorities on these struggles have taken place.

The parliamentary office has been reorganised and the functioning has improved. A research team has been appointed to assist the MPs on legislative matters.

Janwadi Lekhak Sangh fraction committee: Party members are active in Janwadi Lekhak Sangh, which is the biggest organisation of Hindi and Urdu writers. Activities are organised by the state and district units under the guidance of the All India Centre. The All India Centre also organised some independent activities of national importance. Janwadi Lekhak Sangh is active in most of the Hindi states. The functioning of the All India Fraction Committee should be strengthened further. The functioning of the state level fraction committees is either non-existent or unsatisfactory. This need to be seriously rectified.

University and college teachers' fraction committee: During the last three years, functioning of the university and college teachers' fraction had shown a marked improvement. The state level fraction committees are inactive in many states. During the last three years, a central party school was organised for college, university and school teachers.

University employees' fraction committee: After the 18th Congress, an all-India fraction committee for the university employees was organised. Three meetings were held. The functioning of the fraction committee activated the Party members' work on

this front. Party members on this front are working in eight states. State committees should pay more attention to the work among the university employees.

School teachers' fraction committee: There is improvement in the functioning of the school teachers' fraction committee during this period. School teachers' front is trying to coordinate the teachers' movement in all states. There is improvement in the activities of the school teachers' front in West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Tripura. Party members are working in organisations of the school teachers led by individuals, bourgeois political parties and Left parties like CPI. In many states, state school teachers' fractions are not properly functioning. Party state committees should form state fraction committees of school teachers and plan appropriate course of action for expansion of influence among teachers.

Cultural fraction committee: An all India fraction committee was constituted with 38 comrades representing 19 states. The committee held two meetings in 2006 and one in 2008. There is no effective coordination from all India fraction committee level though programmes have been taken up actively and regularly at state level. The aim to exchange experience of the comrades working in different states was achieved only partially. More frequent fraction committee meetings should be arranged and the coordination through the fraction committee should be made more effective.

People's science movement: Party members are working in the people's science movement that has grown steadily over the years. It has been active in the areas of science popularization, science and technology policy, literacy and education, health, women's empowerment, rural artisan technology. Today, the collective membership of the organisations linked to the people's science movement is almost a million and a major portion of the membership is in states where the Party is relatively weak. However, the growth and the links with the Party is uneven across the country and Party committees should pay attention to harness the potential. Many states do not have functioning science fraction to guide the Party members working in the people's science movement. Plans should be made for closer coordination of people's science movement and other mass fronts.

New Type of Mass Organisations

In many states, special types of mass organisations belonging to different sections of the people are active.

The Party Centre convened a meeting of the comrades working in the free software movement in October 2006. The meeting decided to promote the free software movement in all states. State level conventions were planned. The free software movement gives opportunities to reach wider sections such as IT professionals, students undergoing courses in information technology and general public who are interested in the free software movement.

In Andhra Pradesh, many such organisations are active. Immediately after the last state conference, efforts were made in Andhra Pradesh to organise people working in the software section. An urban residential front is working from 2003 onwards. Local welfare association were formed in colonies. The aim is to form a state level

association. Seven other organisations belonging to different professions and artisans such as weavers, shepherds, porters, etc. are working.

In West Bengal, an organisation called Paschim Banga Rajya Pratibandhi Sammelan (PRPS) has been working among disabled persons in the state. This organisation has a membership of 1,25,000. The organisation is working in all 19 districts and district level and block level committees are functioning. PRPS has taken up issues such as providing identity cards, health certificates, free passes and reservation facilities in buses, increase the percentage of reservation in jobs, etc. Every year, December 3rd is observed as 'Disabled Day' in a massive manner with big rallies, seminars, public meetings, cultural functions, etc. On December 3, 2007, comrades from Karnataka and Tamilnadu also participated.

Comrades are working among disabled persons in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Orissa. There are possibilities of expanding the work among disabled persons in all states. These new types of mass organisations help the Party to reach unorganised sections of people and bringing them closer to the Party. More efforts have been made in this direction after the 18th Congress. The present situation offers new opportunities for building new type of mass organisations of different sections. Each state committee should study the different problems of various sections of the people and try to form special type of mass organisations.

Children's Movement

There is a children's movement in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and in some other states. In West Bengal, children's front is called 'Pioneers Organisation'; in Kerala, it is called 'Bala Sangham'; and in Tripura, it is called 'Kishore'. Sports meets, cultural competitions, coaching camps, jathas and other programmes have been organised in these states. Many communal and casteist organisations are trying to organise children on caste and communal lines. They are also propagating all sorts of anti-scientific and obscurantist ideas and practices. State committees should try to form children's organisations. Specific tasks should be assigned at the state and district level to effective cadre to form children's organisation. The all India centre was not able to fulfil the task of issuing guidelines for forming children's organisation on the basis of the review of the experience in states. This task needs immediate attention.

History Commission

The History Commission was reconstituted with Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Jyoti Basu, Prakash Karat (convenor), P. Ramachandran, Koratala Satyanarayana, Anil Biswas and V. S. Achuthanandan. A meeting of the History Commission was held in Kolkata in December 2005. The Commission discussed the publication of the second volume covering the period between 1935–1951. Biman Basu and B.V. Raghavulu have been inducted in place of Anil Biswas and Koratala Satyanarayana, who passed away. The work of the Commission suffered due to the demise of the two comrades and the preoccupation of other members.

EMS Trust

As per the decision of the Polit Bureau, an EMS Namboodiripad Foundation Trust was registered to sponsor a research institute in New Delhi. The EMS trust will set up the institute which will promote research from a Marxist standpoint in various fields and also alternative policies.

REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE PARTY CENTRE, POLIT BUREAU, CENTRAL SECRETARIAT AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The 18th Congress decided that the Party Centre should be strengthened as a political-organisational necessity. The heightened political intervention and expansion of the Party can be fulfilled only by strengthening the Party Centre. It was also decided to recruit more cadres for working at the Party Centre.

Polit Bureau

The 18th Congress elected an 85-member Central Committee keeping one seat vacant to be filled later by a comrade from Kerala. Subsequently, Chairperson of the Central Control Commission, N. Sankariah, was included in the Central Committee as Ex-officio member. The Central Committee elected a 17-member Polit Bureau. Prakash Karat was elected General Secretary of the Party. Anil Biswas and Chittabrata Majumdar died during this period. Because of ill health and old age, Harkishan Singh Surjeet was not in a position to attend meetings some months after the Party Congress. Despite his illness, Jyoti Basu attended PB meetings and CC meetings when held in Kolkata and contributed to the deliberations. On all important policy and organisational issues, his views and advice have benefited the Party.

Buddhadeb Bhattacharya is Chief Minister in West Bengal and Biman Basu became West Bengal state secretary after the death of Anil Biswas. Biman Basu is also discharging some responsibilities of the Party Centre in Assam, Manipur and as convenor of the tribal sub-committee. Manik Sarkar is Chief Minister in Tripura and concentrating in Tripura. He is also discharging some responsibilities of the Party Centre as convenor of the North-East sub-committee. V.S. Achuthanandan is Chief Minister in Kerala and Pinarayi Vijayan is secretary of the Kerala state committee. They are concentrating in Kerala. B.V. Raghavulu is Andhra Pradesh state secretary. He is discharging some all-India responsibilities as convenor of the education sub-committee. R. Umanath is staying in Chennai and helping Party Centre's work in women's organisation, bank and insurance sectors and in Kerala state.

Prakash Karat, S. Ramachandran Pillai, Sitaram Yechury, M.K. Pandhe, Brinda Karat and K. Varadha Rajan are working from the Party Centre. M.K. Pandhe has to devote more time to trade union work. He attends the available Polit Bureau members' meeting in Party Centre whenever he is in Delhi and contributes to the deliberations.

Responsibilities of PB Members

Prakash Karat:	General Secretary, overall coordination and head of the Central Secretariat, Editor of <i>The Marxist</i> . Looking after the committee on Muslim minority. State responsibility of Uttar Pradesh.
Harkishan Singh Surjeet:	Editor of <i>Loklahar</i> .
S. Ramachandran Pillai:	Convenor of the organisation and finance sub-committees. State responsibility of Bihar and Punjab.
Sitaram Yechury:	In-charge of international department, parliamentary sub-committee, science fraction, editor of <i>People's Democracy</i> and looking after the educational front as a whole and student and youth fraction committees. State responsibility of Maharashtra.
M. K. Pandhe:	Convenor of trade union sub-committee and in-charge of CG fraction. State responsibility of Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh.
K. Varadha Rajan:	Convenor of the agrarian sub-committee, in-charge of committee on scheduled caste affairs. State responsibility of Orissa and Karnataka. Assisting Maharashtra also.
Brinda Karat:	In-charge of agit-prop department and women's front. State responsibility of Jharkhand and Uttarakhand.

PB Sub-Committees

The following PB sub-committees were constituted:

Organisation sub-committee:	S. Ramachandran Pillai (convenor), Anil Biswas, Pinarayi Vijayan and B. V. Raghavulu.
Finance sub-committee:	S. Ramachandran Pillai (convenor), Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Prakash Karat and K. Varadha Rajan.

The Polit Bureau meetings are held regularly once in 45 days and urgent meetings are called whenever necessary. The Polit Bureau met 25 times during this period. All important policy matters and organisational matters are decided in the full meeting of the Polit Bureau. The meetings of the available PB members are regularly held to discuss urgent issues, decide on Party interventions, give directions to parliamentary group, state committees, issue statements, hear reports from PB members who attend state committee, fraction and sub-committee meetings.

The PB tried to intervene in many important political, economic and social issues by articulating Party's stand on them. This has helped in projecting Party's distinct identity on such matters. More all-India campaigns have been conducted during this period. PB and CC members participated in these campaigns.

The PB took up many issues such as intervention in food for work programme, implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, dalit issues, work among tribals, Sachar Committee recommendations, review of the experience of Self Help Groups, convention of Bengali refugees for getting scheduled caste status etc.

A research centre set-up by the Party is functioning effectively under the guidance of the Polit Bureau. Three comrades are working from the research centre. A whole timer comrade, who is in-charge of the research wing, is coordinating with other subject experts and is responsible for preparing notes, background materials for the use of the Party Centre and parliamentary Party wing.

The Party Centre prepared 11 policy documents explaining the approaches and alternative positions of the Left parties on important areas. The Party Centre also prepared two other documents—one on regulations on retail trade and another on our approach on the Eleventh Five Year Plan—explaining Party's stand on these areas. These policy documents have helped to project our alternatives, both inside and outside Parliament.

The Party Centre has been able to rally academics, former diplomats, scientists and editors etc. on foreign policy matters and also on Indo-US nuclear deal against the stand of the UPA government.

The Party Centre helped the state committees in adopting correct tactics on political issues and resolving major organisational problems. Meeting of the secretaries of Hindi-speaking states and CC members was called to review the position of whole timers, fund collection and functioning of the Party branches. The Party Centre has devoted more time in settling certain policy matters and inner-Party organisational issues in Kerala. The Party Centre and PB have been unable to discuss the reports of the mass front sub-committees/fractions and give collective guidance to the all-India mass organisation centres. The functioning of the all-India mass organisation centres should be strengthened.

After a gap of over 20 years, the Party Centre called a meeting of the main functionaries of Party dailies. It was held on April 5 and 6, 2007. A total of 19 comrades representing *People's Democracy*, *Lok Lahar*, *INN* and five dailies—*Ganashakthi*, *Deshabhimani*, *Prajashakti*, *Desharkatha* and *Theekkathir*. A representative from the Party members working in *Kairali TV* also participated in the meeting. It was decided to hold similar meetings and workshops at least once a year and another meeting with the editors of weeklies and ideological journals.

Though decided in the 18th Congress, the PB was unable to prepare the ideological document to be placed before the CC. Even though the mid-term review reiterated this task, the work could not be done due to the pressure of work at the Centre.

Disciplinary Action

The Polit Bureau suspended V.S. Achuthanandan and Pinarayi Vijayan from the PB in its meeting on May 25–26, 2007, for making remarks and criticisms regarding each other to the media. Such behaviour is unacceptable from members of the PB. The PB also decided that the two comrades will continue to discharge all their other Party responsibilities. They were taken back to the PB in September 29–October 1, 2007, Central Committee meeting.

Central Secretariat

The Central Committee constituted Central Secretariat consisting of Prakash Karat, Hari Singh Kang, Hannan Mollah, V. Srinivasa Rao and Nilotpal Basu. All the secretariat members are working from the Party Centre. The work of the secretariat is getting integrated as part of the Party Centre. Based on past experience, it was decided that the meetings of the secretariat should be held with available members present on a regular basis. Minutes are kept of the meetings.

Hari Singh Kang is in-charge of the office and discharging part of the work of the international department. Nilotpal Basu is attached to student fraction committee, college teachers fraction committee, the Lekhak Sangh fraction and is looking after Haryana state. Hannan Mollah, apart from his state responsibilities in Rajasthan and Bihar, is attached to the youth fraction. The work of the CC units is being supervised by V. Srinivasa Rao. 98 members are working under these units. Publications, managerial work of the *People's Democracy*, *Lok Lahar* and *The Marxist* are also looked after by V. Srinivasa Rao. He is also assisting in the functioning of the school teachers' fraction. There is a distinct improvement in the functioning of the Party units under the Central Committee.

The work of the secretariat has helped to improve the functioning of the Party Centre. There is scope for further enhancing the work of the Central secretariat by giving more responsibilities at the Party Centre.

Central Committee

Out of the 84 members in the Central Committee, Anil Biswas, Chittabrata Majumdar, Koratala Satyanarayana and B.S. Dhakad died. The Central Committee decided to include Vijay Kant Thakur as an invitee to the Central Committee.

Special Invitees to Central Committee

The 18th Congress decided Samar Mukherjee, Ahilya Rangnekar, T. K. Ramakrishnan and Pappa Umanath as special invitees to the Central Committee. At present, due to age and ill health, they are not able to actively participate in Party work as in the past. T. K. Ramakrishnan died during this period.

CC Sub-Committees and Fraction Committees

The following CC sub-committees and fraction committees were constituted.

TU sub-committee:	M. K. Pandhe (convenor)
Agrarian sub-committee:	K. Varadha Rajan (convenor)
Education sub-committee:	B. V. Raghavulu (convenor)
North-East sub-committee:	Manik Sarkar (convenor)
Tribal sub-committee:	Biman Basu (convenor)
Parliamentary sub-committee:	Basudev Acharya (convenor)

A 17-member committee on Muslim minorities was constituted by the Central Committee at its meeting held on September 24–26, 2006. Prakash Karat looks after the committee.

It was decided to have separate fraction committees for student and youth. Sitaram Yechury looks after the fraction committees. Nilotpal Basu assists the student fraction and Hannan Mollah assists youth fraction committees.

Women's fraction:	Subhashini Ali (convenor)
Insurance fraction:	R. Umanath (in-charge)
Bank fractions:	R. Umanath, W. R. Varadarajan (in-charge)
Science fraction:	Sitaram Yechury (in-charge)
Cultural fraction:	Srinivasa Rao, M. A. Baby (in-charge)
Education front:	Sitaram Yechury (in-charge)
College teachers' fraction:	Nilotpal Basu (in-charge)
School teachers' fraction:	V. Srinivasa Rao to assist
Lekhak Sangh:	Nilotpal Basu is looking after the fraction
Doctors' fraction:	Surjyokanta Mishra (in-charge)
Scheduled caste affairs:	K. Varadha Rajan (in-charge)

State Responsibilities of CC Members and Others

Assam:	Biman Basu, Benoy Konar
Bihar:	S. Ramachandran Pillai, Hannan Mollah
Jharkhand:	Brinda Karat, Shyamal Chakraborty
Uttar Pradesh:	Prakash Karat, Kanai Banerjee, Suneet Chopra
Maharashtra:	Sitaram Yechury, M. K. Pandhe, K. Varadha Rajan
Punjab:	S. Ramachandran Pillai
Orissa:	K. Varadha Rajan, Surjyokanta Mishra
Rajasthan:	Hannan Mollah
Haryana:	Nilotpal Basu
Madhya Pradesh:	M. K. Pandhe
Chattisgarh:	M. K. Pandhe
Karnataka:	K. Varadha Rajan, P. Karunakaran
Gujarat:	Sukomal Sen
Himachal Pradesh:	W. R. Varada Rajan
Jammu & Kashmir:	Mohd. Salim
Delhi:	Jogendra Sharma
Manipur:	Biman Basu, Noorul Huda

Andaman & Nicobar:
Sikkim :
Goa:

Gautam Deb
Asok Bhattacharya
Vivek Monterio

CC Members Working at the All India Centre

Mohammad Amin, Kanai Banerjee, Hemalatha, Suneet Chopra, A. Vijayaraghavan and Noorul Huda are working from the all-India mass organisation centres. W.R. Varada Rajan who was working from the CITU centre has now been shifted to work in Tamilnadu. But he is discharging his state responsibility in Himachal Pradesh. Mohammad Amin, Kanai Banerjee and Hemalatha are concentrating on trade union work. Kanai Banerjee also has state responsibility in Uttar Pradesh. Mohammad Amin has now been working from the CITU centre after being elected as General Secretary of CITU. Suneet Chopra and A. Vijayaraghavan are concentrating in Agricultural Workers Union work. Suneet Chopra has state responsibility in Uttar Pradesh. A. Vijayaraghavan is helping Party work in Kerala. Noorul Huda has been relieved of his Assam state responsibility and now working in the Kisan Sabha Centre. He is assisting Party work in Manipur.

Jogendra Sharma is working from the Party Centre. He has state responsibility in Chattisgarh and Delhi. All other Central Committee members are concentrating in their states.

The Central Committee met 14 times during this period.

The Central Committee adopted two documents—one ‘On Party’s Perspective on Women’s Issues and Tasks’ and another ‘Student Front: Policy and Tasks’. The work to prepare a document on the tasks of the youth front has started.

Conclusion

The whole experience after the 18th Congress confirms that the situation offers opportunities for expansion of the Party. This situation may not last long. Hostile forces are rallying together to stop our advance and to attack us. A breakthrough in weaker areas is necessary to sustain and to expand even in strong centres. Routine organisational measures cannot change the state of unevenness in growth and expansion of the Party which afflicts the Party for many decades. The growing prestige of the Party or the correctness of the political line or the important role Party plays at the national plane can only create favourable conditions but cannot act as engines for Party’s expansion. Concrete organisational steps should be taken for expansion. As Party is built from the top, the all India Centre should ensure that the organisational decisions taken are implemented. Fixing of priority states and districts for concentrating efforts should continue. Plans should be concretized and implemented on a time bound basis. Adequate number of whole timers should be selected and allotted for work in new areas. All efforts should be made to build the Party all over the country by taking appropriate organisational steps. The following immediate steps should be taken:

1. Plans should be made to take up local issues and conduct sustained struggles. Activate the work of the Party members in mass fronts, so that the mass fronts can achieve rapid expansion.
2. Plans should be made to take up social issues and organise agitations and struggles.
3. Concrete plans to activate and improve the quality of the Party members to organise more economic, political and ideological struggles. More political education classes should be organised.
4. Concrete plans should be made to improve the functioning of the branches and Party committees at all levels. Strengthen Party Centre.
5. Review the present state of democratic centralism and take concrete steps to strengthen democratic centralism and improve collective functioning of the Party.
6. Ideological document should be prepared by the Central Committee.
7. Launch a rectification campaign against all wrong trends. The Central Committee should prepare an updated document for launching a rectification campaign.

Part IV Report on Mass Fronts

Trade Union Front

The Political-Organisational Report of the 18th Congress had set out certain tasks to expand the working class movement and the Party's influence amongst the working class. Based on the trade union document adopted by the Central Committee in 2002, certain weaknesses were pointed out which needed to be overcome. Direction was given for the Party to make efforts to convert the several local and sectional struggles into a nation-wide movement to oppose the anti-working class policies of the UPA government. A major weakness pointed out was the insufficient attention paid to fighting communalism and educating the trade union activists and members on the dangers posed by communal forces. There was a direction to strengthen work in the strategic sectors, overcome the slow growth in membership and further push for the democratic functioning of the trade unions. The Party should take up the question of social oppression of sections of the working class that belong to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes; improve the enrolment and participation of women in the trade unions. Particular attention had to be paid to the development of political consciousness among the working class and the task of Party building from among the workers in the unions.

The period since the 18th Congress witnessed expansion of the trade union initiative across the sectors—all directed against the move to accelerate the policies of liberalisation and privatisation under the UPA led political regime. Efforts were made to develop countrywide actions against the policies of the UPA government. There have been two countrywide general strikes on 29th September 2005 and on 14th December 2006. Each of these general strikes demonstrated a bigger sweep covering a wider section of the toiling masses and all the sectors than its previous one. And, in all these countrywide united actions, the Central Trade Unions led by our Party comrades had taken a pioneering initiative.

There have been many sectoral initiatives as well. Most notable have been the indefinite strike action by the entire workforce—both workers and officers of Neyveli Lignite Corporation and the threat of indefinite strike in NALCO which compelled the UPA government to shelve the decision of disinvestments in the Navaratna PSUs. The cease-work by the workers and employees of the Airport Authority throughout the country against the privatisation move of Delhi and Mumbai Airports, a number of strike actions by the bank and insurance sector employees, employees of the central and state governments, Indian Airlines, BSNL are some of the notable examples of the resistance struggle against the neo-liberal policies and attack on their rights.

During the period under review, there have been several independent initiatives of mobilization and struggle by the trade union centre and its allied organisations. Most notable among them have been the massive demonstration before Parliament on 8th December 2006 followed by the countrywide strike action by the unorganized sector workers on 8th August 2007. Response to the strike call was many times more than the membership of the central trade unions in the unorganized sector. The massive 'march to parliament' by the Anganwadi workers and helpers in May 2007, collection of more than one crore signatures in support of their demands, the 10-day long round the

clock dharna and relay hunger strike by anganwadi workers and helpers in New Delhi in July–August 2006 in which 15,000 workers participated from all over the country and the countrywide massive strike by them on 10th July 2007—all organised by the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers reflects the response of the workers in those actions much beyond the membership strength.

There have also been numerous struggles by workers of various sectors at the state level braving brutal attacks by police and employers' goons and embracing martyrdom. To mention a few—the 80-day long strike by the hydel project workers at Chamera, Himachal Pradesh, where three comrades were murdered and state leaders were jailed and tortured, the months-long strike and struggle by the workers of Liberty factories at Haryana, Kirloskar-Toyota workers struggle at Karnataka, railway project workers struggle at Banihal in Jammu & Kashmir where two comrades were killed in police firing, the massive strike in Mayapuri industrial area at Delhi braving severe police repression, the cycle and transport workers' struggle in Punjab, the transport workers struggle in Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh, jute and tea garden workers' struggle in West Bengal etc.

Our main weakness lies in our inability to reach out to a major section of the workers with a call for struggle. Wherever we could reach, there has been a tremendous response despite there being no organisation or membership. This in turn exposes our weakness in organising extensive grass-root level campaigns, involving the comrades as a team, which ultimately indicates a very low level of democratic functioning in the real sense. The trend of a reluctance to go beyond the usual and known periphery prevalent even among the leading comrades in the organisation is also a major retarding factor. Secondly, there still remains a serious weakness in immediate follow-up organisational measures to enrol membership in the union in a planned manner.

As far as the weaknesses in active participation of the members in the regular activities of the unions are concerned, the main weakness lies in the approach of the leadership of the concerned unions. Even now, our campaign programme is limited to routine activities like gate meetings, leafleting and in rare cases, an effort to reach to the entire section of our membership, not to speak about reaching the entire workforce.

Labour and UPA Government

Three and half years rule of the UPA government is a commentary of anti-labour moves in different forms despite the commitment made in the National Common Minimum Programme for protection of interests of working people. Along with the increase in the GDP growth rate, the share of wages in the net value added in manufacturing has declined consistently every year as admitted even in the Eleventh Plan document. This squeeze has taken many routes and the most atrocious one is allowing brazen violation of all labour laws particularly those pertaining to minimum wages, contract work, working hours and social security etc. with direct patronage of the state administration. This facilitated the extraction of a bigger surplus out of the same level of investment and capacity and thus bigger profit for the employers' class. Side by side, effort is being made to change the existing labour laws to legitimize such violations of labour laws. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Bill, SEZ

Bill and the Labour Laws (Exemption from Furnishing Returns and Maintaining Registers by Certain Establishments) Amendment and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2005 are all examples of such desperate efforts. In the backdrop of an active opposition by the trade union movement, the Left parties could successfully intervene to force the government to drop the anti-labour provisions from the first two Bills and the third one is still pending for deliberation in Parliament.

The whole exercise on changes in labour laws being made by the government of the day in collaboration with the employers' lobby is to empower the employers to go for hire and fire at will. On the one hand, the organised sector employment is shrinking and the unorganised sector is growing. In the face of a gradual decline in regular employment in the organised sector and the emergence of unorganized sector workers, consequent upon mass scale contractualisation and outsourcing, the working class movement in the organised sector is facing a big challenge. This reflects a new dimension of the conspiracy to divide the class to intensify exploitation.

Challenges and Tasks

As the situation prevails at the grass-root level, the trade union movement is yet to realize the kind of threat being posed to its survival. This is true not only with the unions affiliated to the trade union centre but also with the unions led by the Party comrades in various service establishments and industries like bank employees, telecom, defence establishments, PSUs etc. Of late, some initiative was taken to focus attention on the contract workers' issues on an all-India plane and a national convention of contract workers has been held jointly by the trade unions in December 2007. In the public sector workers' movement, joint initiative has been taken to raise the issue of contract workers along with the demands of the regular workers from the same platform and plan joint action programmes on the same. In a recent meeting of the committee of public sector trade unions, common demands of both regular and contract workers have been raised and a phased programme of action including a one-day nationwide strike on May 7, 2008 has been chalked out. That initiative must continue and Party committees within trade unions must monitor the continuity of the same with all seriousness.

This initiative has to be pursued and carried forward vigorously. This is a prerequisite for heightening the present level of struggles against the impact of imperialist neo-liberal globalisation to the level of resistance struggles and making the political intervention by the Left more effective.

The 2002 trade union document had pointed out that it was not enough to make general statements about forging worker-peasant alliance. Specific steps were taken to initiate joint campaigns of the workers and peasants. An all-India convention of workers, peasants and agricultural workers was held on 31st August 2007 in Delhi. Issues for a joint campaign were identified and state-level conferences were held in many states. Demands' day was organised jointly in April. The urban unorganised sector and the fast increasing rural labourers in miscellaneous non-agricultural occupations have a common overlapping constituency. The trade union front's effort to organise the unorganised non-agricultural labour, both in urban and rural areas have to be supplemented by joint mobilisation and agitational exercise by the trade union front and agricultural workers union on common issues like minimum wages,

social security, public distribution system etc. This programme has to be conceived as an important task by the Party leadership at all levels and leading Party committees at the frontal level must take initiative in that direction.

Leading Party committees within the trade union movement also must take serious initiative to plan joint efforts along with the Agricultural Workers Union for effective implementation of the NREGA. Already some efforts are being made in this direction in Punjab.

Membership: Regarding the 18th Congress direction to overcome the slow growth in membership some limited progress is there. Between the 17th and 18th Congress, the membership of the trade union front increased by 4.2 per cent. Now between the 18th and 19th Congress, the membership has increased by 14.7 per cent. However, despite the increase in the activities, the growth in membership strength of the unions led by our Party comrades is still tardy and much less than the influence of our movement. Moreover, in the recent verification of membership of the Central Trade Unions, the membership of the trade union front did not fare well in improving its membership due to improper maintenance of records. The most serious drawback was in Kerala. Another reason of our rank going down was the higher membership claimed by other trade unions of agricultural workers. The membership of the trade union front fluctuates from year to year because of non-payment of affiliation fee by the state committees who pay the major amount on the eve of the All India Trade Union conference.

So far as the regular holding of conferences and committee meetings, the situation has improved to some extent but a lot more is required. Conferences and committee meetings are yet to ensure proper lively involvement of the delegates/members participating in the same and breaking the barrier of ritualism. And this weakness is standing in the way of getting more activists and cadre and unleashing organisational initiatives at the grass-root level.

Apart from the trade union centre, our comrades are in leading positions in BSNL Employees Union and All India Insurance front. Both these unions are the largest organisations in their respective industries. The Party has influence only in six to seven states among the BSNL employees. Party building in the other states must be taken up seriously. They have also organised struggles for a better wage agreement. In central and state government employees, our comrades are working in a joint organisation and it has been possible to develop better coordination within the central government employees' movement and between the state and central government employees. In the strike of 30th October 2007, central and state government employees joined together.

In the railways, the union affiliated to the trade union centre got recognition this time in the secret ballot elections. In general, our comrades are working in unions affiliated to the recognised federation. Our comrades have taken initiative in organising contract and outsourced employees and organised movements in support of their demands. In the defence production sector, our comrades' initiative resulted in bringing together ordinance factories, research organisations and public sector units to jointly oppose the policies of privatisation in the defence industry. In the banking sector, our comrades are working in a united union and a remarkable unity of all bank unions has

been achieved to oppose the policies of privatisation and outsourcing in the banking industry.

The task of Party building within the trade union organisations suffers from extreme unevenness throughout the country. Recruitment of Party is overseen by the state committees and district committees and whenever information could be gathered from the deliberation in various fractions, it can be said that the crucial task of Party building within the TUs is not getting the attention and priority it deserves. The trade union front is comparatively the most active mass front led by the Party in most parts of the country but growth of Party membership from this front is quite slow compared to its level of activities. The problem lies due to a lack of appreciation of this task at the unit level Party committees which needs to be overcome by consistent monitoring by the higher Party committees and regular political-organisational review in the fractions at different levels. A coordinating mechanism between the fractions at different levels may be considered to oversee Party building in the TU front.

TU Sub-Committee: There has been some improvement in the functioning of the TU sub-committee since the 18th Congress. But there is difficulty in fixing meetings due to the members having various other engagements. Priority should be given for holding the sub-committees meetings. It has not been able to monitor the functioning of the sectoral fraction meetings properly. Though the central fraction committee has been meeting once in a year, the decision to hold the meetings at least twice in a year has not yet been implemented during this period. Preparations of a written report to the central TU fraction meetings are to be undertaken.

Trade Union Centre: With advancing movement and newer sections of workers coming closer to central trade unions, the work of the trade union centre has increased considerably. However, the trade union centre is not adequately manned to attend to the needs of the growing movement and certain issues are going by default. The functioning of the secretariat has to improve by more coordination among the secretariat members and prioritisation of the activities.

During the period under review, the functioning of the sub-committees and fractions has become more regular. Although, there are serious weaknesses in preparing reports and circulating the same, fractions in almost all the major fronts and also the central fractions met more regularly and had structured discussions on agitation and organisational policy related issues. The TU sub-committee does not get reports of all industry wise fractions and a proper review is not undertaken. This task requires adequate attention in the forthcoming period.

A coordination exercise with all the fractions in the employees front also helped in developing a unified understanding on the movement and related issues in that front and has become useful in planning the activities in that front. Similar coordination exercise may be required to be made between the fractions of the energy sector comprising electricity, coal and petroleum.

For the first time, a Central Party School for the trade union front has been held in Hyderabad in July 2007. Despite inadequate preparation, it marks a good beginning and we must try to keep the continuity of the same. At the same time, similar schools

should be organised in different industries under the guidance of the Central Committee.

Despite the increasing urge and response to united struggle, we are still failing to utilize the full potential of the situation. The pursuit of the exercises for unity with the other trade unions, sometimes gives rise to a trend of compromise with the issue of struggle itself even within our own ranks. We must remain cautious about such trends, while dealing with the emerging possibilities of united countrywide action and must remain clear about our goals.

The direction of the Task Document (1983) is still relevant to pinpoint our tasks in this regard. It noted, “The fact that the struggle for trade union unity is also an instrument to fight alien influence in the working class movement should not be missed. The workers should see that we are struggling for a consistent line and should learn to judge all others in terms of our line. If this is not done, it will be difficult to overcome the likely vacillations of our partners on critical occasions” (page 24).

On Women Membership: There has been growth of the trade union centre’s membership among working women. At the time of the 18th Congress, it was 18.2 per cent which has now increased to 22.6 per cent on the eve of the 19th Congress. There have been efforts to see that participation of women in trade union conferences improve. However, involving women in trade union work and promoting them in the committees is still seriously lagging behind.

Influence of casteism among the workers has posed a serious challenge before the trade union movement. Unions affiliated to the trade union centre also got seriously affected by such caste alignments. Results of secret ballots held in certain industries reflected the same where trade union centre lost in the face of caste polarisation among the workers owing to its failure to address and influence the mass of the workers on class lines. In most of the cases, our leadership within the concerned unions failed to realize the real depth of the problem and undermined the need for focused activities among the dalits and socially downtrodden sections of workers, beyond the trade union issues. Such failure can be attributed to the low level of political consciousness even among our political leadership in the concerned areas. It appears that the direction of the 18th Congress that Party committees and sub-committees at all levels should make systematic efforts for taking up questions of social oppression and also intensive campaigns so that workers shed caste prejudices, has gone practically unattended.

It will also be relevant here to also quote from the report on the Trade Union Front placed in the 17th Party Congress, held at Hyderabad in March 2002, which says, “...We are yet to carry forward the united struggle to an offensive stage for total reversal of the policies. This calls for unrelenting efforts to change the correlation of forces in the trade union movement, through the process of politicisation of our class. This task cannot be left to spontaneity but has to be pursued consciously by the Party from its own independent platform. The root of such neglect has to be searched in the character of the vision and understanding about the role of the working class and the priority of concerned task before the working class party itself.”

As for the weakness in conducting a systematic campaign against the communal forces, there is a need to emphasise this work. The RSS sponsored central trade union has a substantial influence. All trade union classes for activists must include a subject on the dangers posed by the communal ideology to working class unity and the reactionary character of the BJP-RSS combine.

The continuing presence and activities of communal and divisive forces has posed a serious challenge to our efforts for unifying the working class and the toiling people. On the one hand, the ideologues of globalisation have been preaching reconciliation with capitalism and seeking to nurse and promote divisions in the working class by various means in line with occupations, employment conditions and employment relationship, organised vis-à-vis unorganised sector etc. On the other hand, divisive and fundamentalist forces are actively pursuing to ignore the separate class entity of the toiling people vis-à-vis the exploiting class. Moreover, meticulous exercises are going on to deprive the working class of all their rights in the name of flexibility of labour relations and pit one section of working class against the other. We have also noticed how the extremist outfits of various brands, including the Leftwing variety, pose themselves as champions against capitalist exploitation and ultimately play into the hands of extreme rightist forces. Such a situation warrants vigorous ideological work among the working class by the Party to confront and defeat the mounting offensive of de-ideologisation by the ruling class and the media, aided and abetted by the divisive and extremist forces.

In the coming period our work in the trade unions should facilitate more widespread actions drawing in different sections of the working class. Continuous attention has to be paid to the work among workers of the unorganised sector to draw them into the trade union movement. Problems of the contract and casual workers must be taken up so that they are integrated with the trade unions. Initiative taken on the worker-peasant alliance must be carried forward. As part of raising the political consciousness of the workers, the influence of the communal forces must be combated. The way casteist mobilisation of workers can be countered is by taking up the issues of social oppression and discrimination suffered by the dalits and tribal workers. In the Party building, the sub-committees and fraction committees must prepare reports and monitor recruitment into the Party and intensify the efforts at political education.

Kisan Front

The tasks set out at the 18th Congress relate to the issues of taking up local and immediate issues for building movements, building all-India movements on all-India issues, taking up social issues, selection of priority states, districts and allocation of cadre, strengthening of the organisation at all levels and giving importance to Party building etc.

Struggles on Local Issues

During this period, struggles on local issues were conducted in certain states. The struggle conducted by the Rajasthan peasantry along with other sections of the people for water, electricity and rights of the tribal people attracted the attention of the common people and the peasantry. They rallied in large numbers. The experience has proved that intervention at the right time on the right issues and taking up the matter continuously will help in strengthening the kisan front even in the weaker states. The Rajasthan struggle has helped the kisan front to expand the movement in newer areas and the membership has almost increased three times. Efforts are also made to consolidate and widen the movement.

The land movement in Andhra Pradesh wherein the kisan and agricultural workers fronts participated with various other mass organisations is another important struggle which attracted lakhs of people. The struggle for house site pattas in Tamilnadu, for electricity supply and REGA issues in Karnataka, issues affecting the tribal people in Maharashtra and Orissa, for more credit facilities, agitations and struggles conducted in Haryana, the land struggles in Bihar are some of the important local struggles organised during this period. In certain places, the issues were not continuously taken up. Wherever issues were taken up continuously, there the movement expanded to newer sections. In West Bengal, a massive campaign was conducted to rouse the peasantry in favour of industrialisation and a million-strong peasant rally was held in Kolkata on 11th March 2007 to counter the propaganda unleashed by BJP, Trinamool Congress, Congress, Maoist groups, SUCI, certain foreign-funded NGOs and other enemies of the peasantry. The campaign is continuing to raise the consciousness of the peasantry.

All-India Actions

In order to organise united actions on the issues that came up in Sixth Ministerial meetings of the WTO and other connected issues, the kisan and agricultural workers fronts organised a joint convention on August 23, 2005 in New Delhi. On the basis of the decision in the convention, an All India Protest Day and an all India strike was organised on September 29, 2005. This struggle got a very good response among the peasantry. The struggle was reviewed in the 31st conference of the kisan front held in Maharashtra in January, 2006.

The review reports say that the general response to the September 29 call, in most of the states was better compared to our earlier actions. This reflects the general anger of

the peasantry. In this movement, the participation of peasants was very impressive. Nearly ten lakh peasants participated in this movement in all the states.

All-India Jatha

An independent all-India action conducted by the kisan front was the all-India jathas. Four jathas were organised from four corners of the country which culminated in a huge peasant rally in New Delhi on November 20, 2006. Over 40,000 people attended the kisan rally at Ramlila Ground, New Delhi. It was the largest mobilisation organised by the All India Kisan Sabha in the recent period in New Delhi. The four jathas conducted about 430 meetings and more than 8 lakh people participated. The jathas covered most of the states in India. The jathas and the Delhi rally attracted wider sections among the peasantry.

Joint Action with the Working Class

During this period, the main all-India campaign is the joint action of the kisan front, TU front and agricultural workers front. The decision to observe 18th April, 2007 as Demands Day was successfully implemented in many states.

State level conventions were held in Karnataka, Bihar, Rajasthan, Orissa, Assam, Tripura, Kerala and Uttarakhand before the Demands Day.

Though the anger of the peasantry is reflected in the widening and deepening of the struggles in many parts of the country, the struggles conducted by us have not reached a stage of compelling the Government to revise its policies.

Social Issues

Attempts were made to take up social issues in Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh. In other states, no serious efforts were made. In certain states, there is reluctance on the part of the cadre to take up social issues and organise agitations and struggles. Wherever such efforts are made, we have been able to expand among newer sections.

Expansion of the Movement

The membership of the kisan front increased from 1,71,78,722 in 2004 to 2,13,66,978 in 2007. There is an increase of about 42 lakhs of members during this period and the percentage of increase is 24. The unevenness in growth is continuing. But the membership in Hindi states increased from 5,26,342 to 9,38,900, an increase of 78.38 per cent. The major increase is from Rajasthan, Bihar and Jharkhand. The membership in Uttar Pradesh went up from 1,32,169 in 2004 to 2,03,371 in 2006 and declined to 1,59,846 in 2007. Assam made a notable increase. Except in Rajasthan, there is no breakthrough in any of the weaker states. The growth in Rajasthan is also confined to some districts particularly Bikaner, Ganganagar and Hanumangarh.

Organisation

The 31st All India Conference of the Kisan front was held in Nashik, Maharashtra in January 2006. Before that, state conferences were held in all the states. As far as the

district conferences are concerned, there is some improvement in many states. There are still weaknesses in properly conducting district and local level conferences in the weaker states.

The organisational situations in states were discussed at the mass front level and also at the level of the Party state committees in many states. There is some improvement in the functioning of some state committees. Certain state committees do not have enough cadres at the state centre. Most of the cadre allotted to the kisan front have other responsibilities in the Party and are not able to give priority to the kisan front work. The paucity of cadre at the state centre is adversely affecting the work of the kisan front in such states. The attendance of the members of the state committee is also not satisfactory in certain states. During this period, the kisan state centre activities were strengthened in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Assam. West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura are the strong states.

The decision to hold conferences up to block or taluk level, after every membership campaign, is being done in many states. This is helping in activating the members and lower level committees. After every membership campaign, conferences up to block or taluk level should be held. More efforts should be made to strengthen the district committees, so that they can activate the local level committees. The implementation of the decision to hold unit and local level conferences every year immediately after membership campaign has helped to improve functioning of local committees. The functioning of the local level committees should be strengthened for enabling them to take up local and immediate issues for building movements.

All India Centre

Some efforts have been made to strengthen the work of the All India Centre. Noorul Huda has joined at the All India Centre and this has assured the regular functioning of the central office. The bulletin of the kisan front is now printed both in English and Hindi. Six pamphlets were released both in English and Hindi. Cadre training camps were conducted every year in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan, Bihar and Haryana.

Sub-Committee

The sub-committee met four times and available members of the sub-committee met two times in Delhi. Campaigns of alternative policy, pamphlets in Hindi and English, training camp for cadre, mid-term review document on Agricultural Workers Union were discussed in these meetings. The direction that all Party members not only in Party branches but also in higher committees of the Party in rural areas, except those who have been assigned work in other mass fronts, should join and actively work in the kisan or agricultural workers fronts has not been implemented in many places. The Party committees, at various levels, should implement this directive. The sub-committee should continuously monitor the progress.

Experience Summed Up

Considering the unprecedented agrarian crisis and increasing difficulties of the peasantry, the kisan front has not been able to rally wider sections among the

peasantry in movements at the state level except in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The help and guidance given by the all India centre of the kisan front to the states in identifying issues and building movements is inadequate to the present requirements. The state leadership in many states also failed to take up issues and build agitations and struggles continuously. Selection of cadre and allocation of cadre in weaker states and areas is important to identify issues and to build agitations and struggles. The entire Party should realize the importance of this work and adequate attention should be given to take up issues and build agitations and struggles. The routine style of functioning and the attitude of depending on spontaneity should change. The comrades working in this front at the all-India, state and district level should give priority to this work and the Party should make appropriate arrangements. A break-through in our weaker states is dependent on a break-through of the kisan and agricultural workers fronts in weaker areas. There should be more efforts to project the kisan front at the all-India level.

Future Tasks

- 1) Organise more local struggles on immediate issues affecting the peasantry. All India agitations should be planned to highlight policy issues.
- 2) Take up social issues and organise campaigns and struggles. The reluctance in taking up social issues should be reviewed and rectified.
- 3) Plans should be prepared for expansion and they should be implemented on a time-bound basis. Periodical review should be organised.
- 4) Adequate number of cadre should be selected and allotted for building agitations, struggles and expanding the activities of the kisan front.
- 5) The main functionaries of the kisan front at the all-India, state and district levels should give priority for the kisan front work. The respective Party committees should make adequate arrangements for this.
- 6) The functioning of the sub-committee should be strengthened and periodical review of the kisan front should be organised.
- 7) The functioning of the All India Centre should be strengthened and more help should be given to states in planning and organising agitations and struggles. Periodical reviews and corrective measures should be undertaken.

Agricultural Workers Front

The important task set out at the 18th Congress was: “The agricultural workers front should organise wage struggles where the front has some presence. The unemployment issue should be taken with other mass fronts and organise agitations and struggles. Enough attention should be given to take up partial demands and local issues. Many state units and lower level units are neglecting this aspect. Special efforts should be made to expand the influence among the agricultural workers from among scheduled caste and scheduled tribe sections.”

The agricultural workers front tried to implement the decisions of the Party Congress.

Wage Struggle

The agricultural workers front has been organising struggles for minimum wage for their work in the agricultural sector as well as in various governmental employment generation programmes and NREGA. The last conference of the front had given a call to organise wage struggles in 25000 villages all over the country and were successful in mobilising for such struggles in some 15000 villages. States like Andhra Pradesh, Tripura and Tamilnadu were the most consistent in this and account for some 6000 of these. There seems to be hesitation on the part of the party and agricultural workers front in weak areas to take up wage struggles.

NREGA

A major concern of the agricultural labour movement in this period has been employment. The agricultural workers front organisation has been in the forefront in the struggle to get the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act passed. The All India Centre has consistently been taking initiative to mobilise its state units to come forward and lead the struggle for the passage of the Act especially highlighting the issue at its Bhubaneswar General Council meeting in June 2005 and taking active part in the jathas, yatras and other actions for the passage of the Act. The most broad-based performance in implementing the Act has been that of our A.P. state committee. Tripura is another of the state units that has done commendable work in this field. The net result has been that Tripura has implemented the Act better than any other part of the country with 75 per cent implementation. Karnataka is yet another state that has shown initiative. The Act was being implemented in five districts. The front made common cause with kisans, workers, women, youth and students to activate its base and expand it.

In Tamilnadu, the agricultural workers front came forward to enrol agricultural workers in accordance with the Act in all 6 districts of the state where this law is operative. The Maharashtra unit too took up the campaign for the NREGA. There are 12 districts under the Act and the union has taken up issues of job cards, work and wages. 54 lakh people have applied under the act but only 24 lakhs have got job cards so far. The agricultural workers front has launched struggles for proper implementation as well as for other districts to be included in the Act. In Uttar Pradesh, there was a joint campaign with other mass organisations in Lucknow.

Social Issues

The agricultural workers front has undertaken struggles, conventions and yatras on social issues, and the defence of dalits under attack in Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana, reflecting the growing consciousness of the need to fight against casteism and social oppression. It is significant that at least 15 districts in the Hindi speaking states have conducted programmes on social issues in this period.

The central committee of the agricultural workers front has been repeatedly directing the state committees to take up these issues as part of their regular activities. However, except Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu these issues were not taken up extensively. In Andhra Pradesh, a joint broad platform of various organisations was formed to mainly fight against the social evils of untouchability, like ensuring temple entry, breaking the two glass system and ensuring water from common wells. The relentless efforts and hard work put in to these and other similar programmes ensured positive results in bringing the dalit groups together under our banner.

Other Issues

The agricultural workers front took up the issue of comprehensive central legislation for agricultural labour, implementation of welfare measures and for saving paddy cultivation in Kerala, distribution of land and land related issues in Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Bihar, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, issue of price rise, expansion of public distribution system and BPL cards in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Punjab, Bihar, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, issue of house sites in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, free supply of electricity in Punjab, uninterrupted supply of water in Rajasthan and organised demonstrations, *rasta roko*, rallies in different parts.

Organisation

The membership has increased substantially from 29,37,261 to 42,50,754 in 2007, an increase of 44.7 per cent. In the period since the 18th Party Congress, there has been growth in membership in all states except Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The all-India organisation has not expanded beyond the 12 states it existed in 2003-2004, although there is periodic membership in two others—Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

Kerala has the largest membership—18,23,482 (42.8 per cent of the total). Andhra Pradesh follows with 12,65,283 (29.7 per cent). Tamilnadu has 4,35,748 (10.2 per cent), Tripura—2,01,300 (4.7 per cent), Bihar—1,36,610 (3.2 per cent), Punjab—1,02,527 (2.4 per cent), Maharashtra—83,540 (1.9 per cent), Karnataka—72,689 (1.7 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh—67,535 (1.5 per cent), while Madhya Pradesh and Orissa are both below 1 per cent. The other states are all below 1 per cent of the total. Region wise, it is clear that the southern states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Karnataka together constitute 84.6 per cent of the membership. The northern states of Punjab, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan constitute only 8.1 per cent. It is evident that since the last Party Congress, the line of building the AIAWU on the basis of concrete issues concerning agricultural labour has borne fruit in some states notably in the state of Andhra Pradesh, where the membership has more than doubled

since the last Party Congress, but not all states have availed of this opportunity equally. The states that have shown some consistency of growth apart from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura are Tamilnadu and Punjab. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Orissa have shown some initial results. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have shown an uneven development while Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat show a decline. It is evident that these very different results highlight the important role of the state committees of the Party in guiding and helping the mass fronts.

The 6th All India Conference of the agricultural workers front was held at Nawashahar, Punjab from June 3–5, 2007 with 664 delegates of whom 330 were from agricultural labour families and 65 were women. The conference gave a call to observe the 25th anniversary of the front, which began with a mass rally at Kilvenmani in Tamilnadu. Similar programmes are being organised in other states with a view to conducting a march across the country to highlight the demands of agricultural labour.

The agricultural workers front has consistently campaigned for the inclusion of women in all levels of activity. To encourage this, women's conventions have been organised in most states. In Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Punjab and U.P. these conferences were a success. Much more should be done to ensure their integration into the organisation and in the struggle.

In the intervening period, a southern region class was organised in Tamilnadu and a northern region class is pending. It will be organised in Delhi in April.

All India Centre

The central functionaries met as often as possible and decisions were taken for implementation. State responsibilities were distributed and the all-India leaders are attending state committees and participating in some struggles and activities. But the help and assistance from the All India Centre to the states is insufficient to the requirements of the present situation. The all-India functionaries should devote more time and attention to the work of the agricultural workers front. The Party should discuss this matter and necessary arrangements should be made. The work of the All India Centre should be strengthened. Office work should be reorganized.

The centre produces an information bulletin to highlight important issues from time to time. Three issues have been produced since the Party Congress.

State Committees

Kerala and Tripura state committees of the agricultural workers front have regular functioning over the years. Andhra Pradesh state committee has developed its new style of functioning which has borne fruit both in terms of growth of membership and increased area in terms of influence. Tamilnadu has a regularly functioning state committee but lacks independent functioning at the lower level of the organisation. Punjab and Maharashtra have shown some development in this period and have taken initiative in launching movements which have allowed them to grow. Karnataka has only two functioning district committees and has expanded to new areas where taluk level activity has developed. In Maharashtra too, the front does not have an independent office at the state centre.

In the Hindi region, the state committees' functioning varies. In Bihar, if the leadership works unitedly, much more progress can be made. In Uttar Pradesh, there was weakness in the state centre work resulting in stagnation in the membership. In Rajasthan, the organisation functions only in two districts. In districts like Sikar where it was earlier functional, the front has ceased to function as its cadre have been inducted to the kisan front. In Haryana, while the organisation enrolled membership in 6 districts, it was never able to have an independent office at the state centre. Now the leadership of the front has changed but the task of setting up a state centre is a major hurdle to development. In Orissa, there is a state centre functioning with one whole-timer but the problem of evolving district and local units remain. By and large, the meetings of the state committees are regular. The situation in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh has deteriorated as a result of the failure in both states to give even minimum cadre to develop the organisation.

District and Lower Level Committees

The agricultural workers front has a presence in 177 districts in the country. Its target for the conference is 200 districts. The number of district committees is as follows: Tamilnadu (24 from an original of 27), Andhra Pradesh (23), Kerala (14), Tripura (4 districts but organised as 15 sub-divisional committees), Punjab (14), Uttar Pradesh (13), Bihar (12), Maharashtra (10), Karnataka (3), Haryana (6), Orissa(5), Rajasthan (2) and Madhya Pradesh (1). The size of these district committees varies between 2 lakhs and 1000. The functioning also varies in accordance with the uneven development we have noted above with regard to states and regions within them.

Future Tasks

- 1) Efforts should be continued to form agricultural workers front units in states where they are not organised other than the state of West Bengal.
- 2) Organise agitations and struggles on issues of wages, land, house sites, proper implementation of NREGA and social issues.
- 3) More attention should be given to take scheduled caste and scheduled tribe comrades in leading positions in agricultural workers front at all levels.
- 4) The All India Centre of the agricultural workers front should be strengthened.
- 5) An independent office with a minimum two to five comrades should be ensured in all state centres. The district committees also should ensure the same. Party state committees should ensure adequate numbers of cadre are allotted to the agricultural workers front.
- 6) Special efforts must be made by the Party committees to educate the militant comrades in agricultural workers front and recruit them in the Party.

Women's Front

In the last three years, the women's organisation has taken up several issues within the framework laid out at the 18th Party Congress.

On the question of imperialism, campaigns have been held to highlight the US intervention in Iraq and its impact on women and children, and against the Nuclear Deal that the Govt. of India is trying to operationalise.

Especially in BJP-ruled states, the women's organisation units have highlighted the politics of communal hatred of these governments. Although the need to fight against communal forces has been time and again highlighted, and members have articulated how the revival of rituals and religious practices are used to stoke communal feelings, a much more concerted and effective effort is needed.

On the question of casteism, although the organisation may have intervened in particular cases of caste atrocities, much more needs to be done on the general issues of discrimination against dalit women.

The Tripura unit has been in the forefront of the struggle against extremists while our West Bengal unit is also facing this challenge courageously.

The women's organisation units have been in the forefront to highlight the impact of neoliberal economic policies on different sections of women. In particular there have been many struggles against the dismantling of the PDS and for expansion in the number of BPL cards. Price rise, the periodic hikes in prices of diesel and petrol, electricity and water rates in different states have been taken up. There has been a concerted campaign to pin down the UPA government to the promises it made in its CMP. In particular, successful campaigns were held for the passage of NREGA, the Domestic Violence Act, and Tribal Forest Rights Bill. The issue of the Women's Reservation Bill has been raised extensively.

A major weakness has been the failure to address the issues related to the agrarian crisis, which will have to be rectified immediately.

The women's organisation units have intervened on the issue of female foeticide and the declining sex ratio and, of course, on many issues related to violence of different kinds.

Even the weaker Northern states have taken up issues of honour killings and violence involving political heavyweights.

Although many women get mobilised in the campaigns, our experience is that wherever we are not able to successfully bring out the inherent defects of State policy that are responsible for the problems experienced by women, (as in the case of BPL ration cards and PDS generally) there is demoralisation; but where the connection is properly established, the organisation gains and is able to consolidate.

As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, the organisation decided to highlight the importance of continuing the still-unfinished struggle for social reform. All state units

organised a 15 day 'jatha' which visited sites associated with the freedom struggle, the social reform movement and the movement for equality and justice. Songs, plays and literature around these themes were used during these jathas. The experiences were very positive and enabled the organisation to reach out to many sections.

As in the past, we have also made efforts to have joint campaigns along with other women's organisations. There has been some change in the scenario: the new leadership of some of these organisations do not have the same commitment to the issues of imperialism, communalism and globalisation as their predecessors. The effect of 'NGO-isation' is also clearly visible. In addition, the events in Nandigram and the vicious anti-Left campaign that was initiated also had an adverse effect. Unfortunately, the other major Left oriented organisation's leadership also played a very negative role. The patient and consistent efforts to counter this propaganda, however, have had their impact and attempts to isolate us have not succeeded.

Not much headway has been made as far as joint action with the fraternal organisations is concerned. More efforts are needed on both sides. For example, on the question of dowry, female foeticide, joint campaign with the student and youth organisations should be initiated. Similarly, there has to be much more discussion with CITU on the issues of anganwadi workers and domestic workers, as also with the kisan and agricultural workers fronts.

The West Bengal unit has had to face a difficult time especially in the wake of the Nandigram incidents. They have made a heroic effort to counter the vicious propaganda campaign but also to successfully organise relief for the poor families in the camps and also in accelerating their various activities in a very difficult period. As a result, their membership has increased by 6 lakhs in the period.

In Kerala, an important initiative has been to organise widows and take up their special problems. Our Karnataka unit has taken up the enrolment of women workers for NREGA work and has been consistently fighting for their demands and this has resulted in an increase in membership in 2 NREGA districts.

Our AP unit has been very active in the struggle launched by the Party and the fraternal and class organisations for house-sites. The participation of women in the struggle was very impressive and many new sections of poor and minority women were drawn into it.

States like Kerala, Tripura, AP, Orissa, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Delhi have taken the organisation of SHGs seriously with good results.

The women's organisation Research Centre has been active in this period. It successfully completed a study on NREGA in 4 States for the MORD and UNDP and is currently involved in another study on the same subject in 4 different states. This is an area of research where the Centre must become more active. The small efforts have already brought some intellectuals/academics close to the organisation.

The Muslim women's sub-committee of the women's organisation CEC has been active in this period. There has been a planned attempt to reach out to large sections of Muslim women and to draw them into our organisation. A signature campaign was

taken up all over the country demanding some changes in the way that Muslim Personal Law is interpreted and implemented in India. This was a difficult and painstaking task and thousands of signatures have been collected.

Almost all the states have held Muslim women's conventions at different levels. The membership of Muslim women in the organisation in states like Tripura, AP, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, West Bengal, Kerala, UP has increased. In a weak state like UP, 2 districts have Muslim women whole-timers and this has proved to be a very important initiative. The conventions have also led to local level campaigns and struggles around issues like civic amenities, police atrocities, ration cards etc.

Once the Sachar Committee's report was made public, the sub-committee of the executive drew up a Muslim women's Charter. Using this as a basis, many states have organised district and local level conventions on this issue.

One important result of these activities is that the exposure of the activists to the problems of Muslim women and their social interaction with them has brought about a welcome change in their attitudes. The increased recruitment of Muslim women has, of course, improved the composition and functioning of the organisation. Many states have made a conscious effort to develop Muslim cadre and leaders.

One issue that has been taken up seriously and consistently all over the country is that of food security with special emphasis on strengthening PDS, increasing the numbers of BPL, Antodyaya and Annapoorna cards. Every district with a women's organisation presence has seen some activity around these issues. In the course of these campaigns, surveys have been conducted, long-drawn out protests, struggles and jathas have been organised. To give an impressive example, the Kerala state unit organised a week long series of jathas culminating on 10th December in the course of which they held thousands of meetings, dharnas etc. and collected 10 lakh signatures demanding, among other things, that cuts in the supplies of rations to the state by the centre be immediately restored.

The highlighting of this issue by the women's organisation units throughout the country has been an important contribution towards the focus that it is now receiving from the entire Party.

The problem of keeping live contact with the membership was discussed at the last national conference. We had decided that the most effective way of dealing with this problem was by concentrating on Unit Functioning. This has been taken up by most of the State units but both the efforts and the results are of varying degrees. The proper renewal of membership is also an area that needs more attention in the weaker states. Ideological training of cadre needs to be taken up in a much more organised manner by the different states.

A satisfying feature is that almost all the States have seen an improvement in independent functioning. Executive committee meetings at the State and Central level are held regularly and the attendance has improved. Conferences at all levels are also held regularly. In many of the weaker States there has been an effort to hold State and District Secretariat meetings also with good results. Unit level conferences are also being held in larger numbers than before.

The marked change in the approach of the Party leadership towards the independent functioning of the women's front in most states is especially reflected in the conduct of the conferences of the mass organisation.

There is still some weakness where the main functionaries of the organisation are not whole timers, which will have to be addressed seriously in the coming period. In West Bengal and Kerala when the general secretaries of the state units became ministers, the committees elected others to take up their work. A periodic review of the work and performance of whole-timers of the organisation must be undertaken.

The recruitment of women in the Party has shown some improvement compared to the time of the last Congress. While women's membership was around 10 per cent of the total membership in 2004, it has gone up to 12 per cent in 2007. There has been some improvement in most states in the recruitment of women Party members and the FCs/subcommittees are certainly contributing to this. Tripura has achieved the highest percentage—over 20% but Kerala (12%) and West Bengal (11%) can do better. The decision by West Bengal and Kerala state committees to recruit at least one woman in a branch has not yet been fully implemented. When this is done there will be a significant improvement in the overall women's membership. The membership of the organisation crossed the one crore mark after the 18th Congress. In the Northern States, the situation is, of course, worse except for Delhi where women PMs form nearly 19% of the total.

A central school for women cadre was held for the first time by the Party centre. 100 comrades attended the school in November 2005.

The women's front FC has met regularly and there have been 8 meetings since the last Party Congress. The discussions have been very helpful and interventions made by the PBM-in-charges have been very positive.

All the states now have either FCs or sub-committees or both. Most states are reporting that these are functioning regularly. In Punjab, however, the Party leadership did not consult the women sub-committee before deciding that the CEC members from the state should not be included in the CEC elected at the last conference. This is a serious lapse. Bihar and Rajasthan are also lagging in the functioning of these committees.

In West Bengal, Tripura, Kerala and Tamilnadu, the CC document on the Women's Question has been translated and discussed till the district level. It has been discussed in the state committees and extended meetings in Bihar, Haryana, Himachal, Orissa etc. but in U.P., Rajasthan and other states it has not been discussed at all. In Maharashtra, it has been translated and printed but has not even been discussed in the state committee. Unless the document is discussed seriously at all levels, many problems cannot be tackled satisfactorily.

The 18th Congress had stressed the importance of the Party directly taking up social issues. Many of these issues are directly concerning women—the falling sex ratio, dowry and discriminatory practices against women. Still the prevalent view in the Party is that these are to be taken up by the women's organisation. The Party should

incorporate such issues in its general platform and Party leaders should address these issues in their speeches.

Youth Front

Youth Front is working to build a powerful, democratic youth movement and for the upliftment and betterment of the youth as a whole. Youth Front has been organizing the youth by raising and fighting for their demands through launching campaigns and struggles at various levels. It is through this process that youth front has emerged as the largest entity of the organized youth having a membership of 17,150,232 in 2007.

The report of the 18th Party Congress has stated that ‘the mass organizations have to play an active role in forging the widest movements both for pressurizing the government to implement pro-people measures included in the CMP and to fight against the ill effects of the continuing policies of liberalization and the effects of imperialist driven globalization.’ In order to carry out this task, the report had further stated that ‘agitations and struggles should be organized at all India level and adequate importance should be given to organize local struggles by taking up partial and immediate demands of the common people.’

In this context, during the period after the 18th Party Congress, in the course of facing the challenges posed before the youth community, the Youth Front has been organizing several important political, agitational and organizational activities. While the question of employment has been the major issue, the youth front has also raised the issue of education and health and has raised the slogan—“For India’s better future, invest in Youth”.

During this period Youth Front intensified its campaign against unemployment and organized two all India Youth Rallies at New Delhi in November 2006 and February 2008 after conducting nationwide campaigns. On both occasions, the campaign was conducted at all India level but for the mobilization of the youth, the main thrust was given on the weaker states. Though there was a good participation of youth in these campaigns at state and district levels, the mobilization of around 10 thousand youth in Delhi is an index of inadequate mobilizing potential of the Youth Front.

Youth Front has played an active role in forging the broader movements against anti-people policies by implementing the calls of the All India General Strikes. Youth participated in large numbers in different states to make the youth front’s call of Rail Roko, Rasta-Roko successful. Youth Front launched a nation wide movement against the anti-youth job killer circular issued in November 2005 by the Ministry of Finance, Dept. of Expenditure, which evoked a good response and thousands of youth participated in this movement all over the country.

To ensure the effective implementation of NREGA, Youth Front has made active interventions in various districts. While helping the people in making job cards, Youth Front intervened to expose and stop the malpractices. Even in weaker states like Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, Youth Front successfully launched struggles in some districts and areas of its influence. This is a programme essentially meant to provide employment to the most downtrodden sections of rural youth. This perspective could not be translated by the interventions that ought to have been made.

The slogan of ‘Jobs for all, Education for all’ remains the central slogan for campaign and movement of Youth Front. On 15th September every year, the issue of jobs for all

and education for all were taken up during this period independently or jointly with Student Front where state and district level youth rallies and other programmes with youth mobilization were organised.

In the background of attacks on employment and education and a reactionary movement against the Central Government's decision to provide 27% reservation for OBCs in the educational institutions, Youth Front conducted a campaign and organized an All India Convention on Employment, Education and Reservation. Against the continuous rise in prices of food items and other essential commodities, Youth Front organized a nationwide 'Chakka Jam' on 7th July 2006. Youth Front also organized nationwide movement and protests against the hike in the prices of petrol and diesel.

Youth Front, while continuing with its campaign against communal forces at various levels, organized special campaigns in wake of the communal incidents in different places. State committees through their own initiatives organized campaigns for communal harmony. Protests were organized against the incidents of terrorist attacks in different parts of the country and to oppose the attempts of creating regional divide in Assam and Maharashtra. Youth Fronts initiatives to provide relief to the earth quake and flood affected people evoked good response. In J&K, Youth Front was the first organization which started relief work even before the government machinery could reach the affected people.

During this period, assembly elections were held in several states. Youth Front played an important role in these elections, campaigning in favour of the Left, democratic and secular forces. Youth Front printed and distributed the campaign materials among the youth and other sections of society—specifically highlighting the need for electoral advances of the Left and Democratic forces and the Left Front Government's in preserving and expanding the interests of the young people.

Upholding the glorious legacy of anti-imperialist struggle, the youth front has been quick in reacting to the challenges of imperialist forces and organized several campaigns mobilizing youth to oppose US occupation of Iraq, Bush' India visit, against the execution of Saddam Hussein, against the Israel's brutal attack on Palestinian people and kidnapping of their elected representatives in June 2006. When Israel attacked Lebanon, the Youth Front called upon its units to organize protests.

Youth Front launched a campaign against the joint Indo-US Naval Exercise in the Bay of Bengal. The organization also conducted a nationwide campaign opposing the Indo-US 123 Nuclear Deal.

16th World Festival of Youth and Students was held in August 2005 in Venezuela with the slogan "For Peace and Solidarity we struggle against Imperialism and War". The Youth Front was the Coordinator of the National Preparatory Committee (NPC) of India.

To commemorate the birth centenary year of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh and 150 Years of 1857, Youth Front undertook special year-long programmes and campaigns

to reach out to the maximum number of youth with the slogan “Uphold the anti-imperialist tradition of our freedom struggle”.

Movement on Local Issues

Since the 18th Party Congress, the youth Front has emphasized the importance of movements on local issues. As a result there has been some improvement in identifying and organizing struggles on local issues even in some areas and districts of weaker states like Rajasthan, Haryana and H.P. Attempts have been made to organize struggles on these issues on a sustained basis. But, serious weaknesses are still there in this regard in almost all the states. In Kerala and Tamilnadu Youth Front’s active intervention on local issues has helped in expansion of the organization. In Mumbai, Youth Front has played an effective role in launching a sustained wider struggle on the issue of local train services. There is a need to plan struggles on local issues more effectively. To develop the youth movement and to widen its base, Youth Front’s intervention in social issues and problems is necessary.

The review of the activities also shows that apart from the campaigns launched against the communal incidents in different parts of the country, sufficient attention has not been paid to the task of fighting against communalism.

Youth Organisation

During this period Youth Front has completed 25 years of its formation on 3rd November 2005 and celebrated its Silver Jubilee with slogan of Struggle, Sacrifice and Advancement. The 8th All India Conference of youth front held on 7–11th May, 2007 at Chennai. “For India’s better future, invest in youth” was the slogan of the conference.

During this period Youth Front has registered an increase in its membership, from 1,42,89,210 to 1,71,52,232 in 2007. But, despite this growth, the analysis of membership presents a picture of unevenness. As a result, in strong states Youth Front has further expanded its base in new areas. But, in weaker states though there has been a slight improvement in states like Rajasthan and UP, serious attempts have not been made and the weakness of not getting a breakthrough in weaker states still continues. The growth in Jammu & Kashmir during this period from 5,000 to 1,31,000 has been significant. From the all India Centre of the Youth Front, attempts have been made in Sikkim and Andaman in this regard. In order to reach out to the new sections of the youth, Youth Front organized Tribal and Dalit Youth Convention and Young Women convention during this period raising the slogan ‘for consolidation and expansion of the youth movement.’ But unless specific local level initiatives are made to back this up, these initiatives will remain a tokenism.

In its report the 18th Party Congress while underlining the organizational task of preparing concrete plans for expansions of the mass organization at all levels also correctly noted that “a considerable section of the mass organization is inactive and their participation is confined mainly to the payment of membership fees”.

As per the discussion in the 18th congress, in order to activate its inactive members, the Youth Front underlined this serious weakness and decided to give utmost priority

to the task of unit formation and their proper democratic functioning. In this regard a special initiative has been taken to collect the data of total primary unit committees in different states every year. In some states progress has been made in this regard. But it is clear that there is a serious short coming in organizing Youth Front's membership in units. The fact that there is no concrete data available is in itself a sad commentary on the existing state of affairs.

The Party has emphasized the need of the independent role and identity of the Youth Front. The document 'On Approach to Mass Organisations' has also underlined this aspect. But apart from the strong states, there is a lack of independent identity and the role of the Youth Front. At lower levels there is no distinction between the Party and the youth front in many places. In most of the weaker states, the projection of the independent role is seen only at the time of all India level calls of campaign and mobilization. The tendency to participate in calls and campaigns of other mass organizations without carrying the flags and banners of the Youth Front still exist. The task of campaign and propaganda in the name of Youth Front is neglected. The projection of independent role and identity is necessary. Often the Party Committees are also not conscious of emphasizing this independent role of the Youth Front. It has been observed that directives and circulars are issued by the Party asking the Youth Front to participate in Party programmes instead of trying to mobilize youth through the mechanism of the Fraction Committees.

In order to ensure and improve the democratic functioning, efforts have been made from the all India centre of the Youth Front and there is significant improvement on this aspect at least at the level of state committees. There is a need to strengthen these efforts to ensure democratic functioning up to primary units. Though in some states, conferences and executive committee meetings are regular, efforts for improvement have to be intensified. In any case, little progress has been made from district level committees down ward in the weaker states.

All India Centre

At all India level, there is not much improvement in the functioning of the centre since the last Party Congress. Three comrades—President, General Secretary, and the Treasurer are supposed to be based and function from the centre. But that is not the situation. Presence of the central functionaries at the centre has to be a matter of practice and not dictated by the needs of any specific programme. Attending programmes in the states both agitational and organizational is extremely important but that cannot reduce the necessity of central planning and intervention.

From its Centre the Youth Front is providing allowances to 3 Central functionaries, the office secretary and 1 office assistant and to 9 other comrades in different states. In order to improve the functioning of the Centre, the number of cadre working from the Centre has to be increased.

Party and the Youth

In finalizing the tasks the 18th Party Congress had concluded, 'the Party should recruit more young cadre at all levels, deploy them in different parts by assigning specific tasks, monitor their performance and promote them on the basis of their efficiency.' It

is obvious that these tasks cannot be successfully achieved without attaching proper attention to the work of Party building among youth through our Youth Front work.

So far as the aspect of deployment of Party cadre and Party members in mass organization work is concerned there is a lack of proper cadre policy in most of the states. As a result, the potential of Party members working in the Youth Front are not being utilized properly. In many places youth front's priorities to get cadre deployed are ignored by the Party committees. In some states not even a single cadre is functioning from the state centre. In many places even the key functionaries of youth front are not devoting their main time to the work of mass organization as they have other responsibilities. This needs serious intervention by the state Party committees. In absence of the proper functioning of the fraction committees, the task of periodic review of the work of the Party members remains unfulfilled. The 18th Party Congress had decided to adopt a policy document on the Youth Front. Unfortunately, this task could not be achieved. The imperative for this document has become urgent to rectify these problems.

It was decided by the 18th Congress to replace the student –youth sub committee with separate fraction committees. This was intended to attach greater focus on the specifics of each of these two important fronts. Additionally the aim was also to strengthen the consciousness of the leadership of the frontal organizations not just as leaders of the respective frontal organizations but as party organizers for organizing those sections in the Party in greater number. However, there is no significant progress in this direction. The Youth Front fraction committee has only met thrice since the 18th Party Congress. The fraction of the central executive committee of the Youth Front has been taking place regularly for political reporting of the decisions of the Party CC at the time of the executive committee meetings. The absence of the regular meetings of the fraction committee is creating a void in taking up discussions and planning on questions of policies pertaining to the Youth Front and building the Party among youth.

In many states attempts are yet to be made to implement the Party CC document 'On Approach to Mass Organisation' adopted in 2004. In many states Youth Front fraction committees are either yet to be formed and even if they have been formed are not meeting regularly. This is leading to the Party Committees not being able to discuss the Youth Front agenda in their meetings. As a result serious weaknesses in the functioning of the Youth Front in these states still persist. Based on the CC document, there is an urgent need for discussion on Youth Front in these states.

Finally, Party CC has to adopt the policy document on Youth Front for developing a clear and common understanding about the Front's perspective and priorities as soon as possible after the 19th Party Congress.

Student Front

One of the important tasks decided by the 18th Congress of the party was to immediately evolve a policy document for the student front. This task was accomplished after a series of discussions taking into consideration the changed international, national situation, the updated Programme of the party and the student front.

The last Party Congress noted the positive political climate in the country. It was an opportune time to strive for the growth and strengthening our party among the students. The UPA government dependent on the crucial support of the Left parties was forced to pay attention to social welfare schemes and this has to an extent benefited education sector too. The allocation for education has increased though not to the extent that is needed and we have aspired for. A constitutional amendment and central legislation providing for reservations to the other backward sections in central educational institutions was moved at our initiative. Our consistent opposition to allowing foreign educational institutions is impeding the government from legitimising them on the excuse of regulating their entry. New schemes of scholarships for the minority and dalit students were started in this period. These positive developments apart, the government has still not passed the crucial Right to Education Bill and is showing undue concern about the costs involved without considering its positive social effects. Even the Prime Minister has been forced to concede this for ensuring 'inclusive growth'. The promised central legislation to bring all unaided private educational institutions under social control has still not been brought before the Parliament even for discussion. The government had opened education sector for 100% FDI as per its commitments under the GATS treaty in August 2005 ignoring the widespread opposition to the move.

The communalisation of education is still continuing as a grave threat in the BJP ruled states. The changes that were brought in the textbooks in Rajasthan are irrational and spew venom against minorities, dalits and tribals. Though our student movement had raised these issues, we could not halt the designs of these governments due to our limited strength in these states. Neither were we able to take up this issue in such a manner that it could draw attention of the entire country. Another important development that had taken place is the growing casteist influence in the campuses. Under the garb of opposing reservations, all the reactionary forces have come together and formed a student organisation with the support of big corporates. Though no political party came out in direct support of their demand, some of the bourgeois parties have tacitly abetted their movement. A vicious campaign against reservations and social justice was carried out by them with the overt and covert support from the media, particularly the English media. We have reacted immediately to this challenge and carried out an ideological campaign to counter the arguments of the reactionaries, clearly stated our position and preserved the unity of the students. In the coming days, the struggle against communalism and other reactionary forces would have to continue as our priority.

It has been also noted that the ultra-Left trend is emerging among certain sections of the students. There has to be a systematic political and ideological campaign against this development. That the different naxalite groups and their political approach end

up in disrupting the Left movement and play into the hands of forces of reaction should be the basis of such a campaign.

Many states in the country still do not have elected student unions in educational institutions in spite of the recommendation made by the Lyngdoh Committee which was appointed by the Supreme Court to look into this question. The performance of our student organisation in the student union elections wherever they are held is good. In West Bengal in spite of the ganging up of the entire opposition and the malicious campaign unleashed by them, we could win most of the students unions—increasing our numbers over the previous year. Only this year we have lost all the central posts in JNUSU and also suffered setbacks in some universities. The student front should overcome these setbacks and regain our positions immediately. Struggles for democratically elected students' unions have to be conducted wherever they are absent.

It is in the background of these circumstances that we have to assess the activities of the student front.

Estimate of the student organisation: The student movement had witnessed a growth during this period. This growth is not only represented in the increasing numbers of the members enrolled in the organisation but also in the activities conducted and militant struggles organised. In spite of this positive growth, it has to be accepted that we failed to utilise the opportunities that were presented by the positive political climate prevalent in the country.

The policy document helped in developing our clarity and identified certain key areas which have prioritised. Along with the states that the party is prioritising, the student front also identified to assign priority to Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. Government institutions and students from deprived communities like dalits, adivasis, and minorities have been identified as priority for the student front. Though there was an attempt to reorient the work of the student front accordingly, the entire organisation is yet to translate them into action.

Some of the weaknesses that were identified during the last Congress are still continuing. Though an effort has been made to conduct sustained struggles, tokenism still continues in some states. The unevenness in the growth of the organisation is still continuing. There is no breakthrough achieved by the movement in the Hindi-speaking states. The experience of the border committees is very positive and is helping the movement in the weaker states.

Political schools are regularly organised at the mass organisation level in various states and this has to continue. Efforts should be directed to conduct the political schools in a planned and systematic manner. The party had organised a political school for the leadership of the student front and this helped a lot. Together with this, regional level schooling on similar lines has to be organised.

Unevenness in membership: The total number of students eligible for membership in our organisation is 10,00,98,108 and our membership for the year 2005–06 is 39,35,485 from 23 states. This means that only 3.93% of the students are in our organisation. Of course the total per cent of students in the organised student

movement taking into consideration the membership of all other student organisations too is not more than 10%. This means that a large chunk of the students are outside the organised student movement and are an easy prey to all sorts of reactionary ideologies. It is thus imperative for the student front to immediately reach out to the vast number of students outside our fold and organise them.

Over the years our organisation is witnessing a steady growth in membership in the absolute terms. In our strong states like West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura there is a considerable increase in the membership. In states like Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, we are witnessing a positive trend of the growth in the membership. Another positive feature is that weak states like Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh too are putting in efforts to overcome their weakness on this front, though Gujarat remains an area of concern. The situation in states like Bihar and Maharashtra where we had a considerable presence and membership earlier is a matter of concern and efforts should be made to re-attain the position of eminence. In fact, the membership has registered a decline in nine states, most of them in the Hindi heartland.

If we analyse our membership only West Bengal and Kerala account for 64.98% of the all India membership. If the membership of Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu is added to that of West Bengal and Kerala, it would be 92.09% of the total membership. This shows that in the remaining 18 states our membership is only a paltry 7.91%. Of the 7,57,031 increase in membership, the five strong states of West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu account for 7,07,034 or 94% since the 18th Congress. This analysis shows the weakness of the student front in most parts of the country.

All India Centre: Four comrades are working from the all India Centre. The Centre is functioning with some co-ordination. Centre meetings are organised regularly and work is planned in them. The attendance of Central functionaries in the state level meetings/programmes is still not satisfactory. A special emphasis needs to be given to help the weak states in their planning, expansion and strengthening of the movement. The Centre had immediately reacted to the issues that have come up from time to time. The questions of reservations, foreign education providers, scholarships, imperialist penetration in our education system are some of the examples. The Centre should prioritise its tasks and plan its work accordingly. There is still a need and scope for a lot of improvement in the working of the Central functionaries especially in guiding the weak states and attending their programmes. Functioning of the Central office has to be immediately improved.

Units: The unevenness in the membership is due to the unevenness of our organisational strength and this is reflected even in our organisational structure. This is reflection primarily due to the fact that in some areas we are still not organising struggles on an institutional level charter of demands and properly connect with the student community. The strong states have their conferences regularly and the respective committees too meet regularly. In some of the weak states too the state conferences and the state committees are held regularly but the same is not true from the district level downwards. The functioning of the committees too has to be improved a lot. A major problem of the organisation is the functioning of the primary units. There are at present 10,345 primary units in our country of which 9,544 are in only four states—West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh. This leaves just

811 primary units in the rest of the country. The functioning of the primary units except in the strong states like West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura is very weak. This has to be improved, as these are the places where we get our cadre.

Review of some major activities:

- **All India Jatha:** An important activity organised by the student organisation during this period is the all India jatha on a charter of demands. The jatha covered all the states and an extensive campaign was carried. In many of the weak states, this made the cadre approach for the second time the students who are enrolled as the members of the mass organisation. Nearly fifty lakh signatures were collected from the students on the charter of demands and submitted to the Prime Minister.
- **Campaign against Indo-US nuclear deal:** An extensive campaign was carried out in the campuses against the nuclear deal and also the imperialist intervention in our internal affairs. The adverse effects of entering into a strategic alliance with US were explained with a special emphasis on education.
- **Local struggles:** Various states have identified the issues pertaining to their states and also at the institute level and waged sustained struggles on them. This has helped in the involvement of large sections of the students in our struggles and also the expansion of our organisation in new areas. The struggle waged by our Kerala state committee against the self-financing professional colleges, for the betterment of conditions in hostels in Andhra Pradesh, against privatisation of ITIs in Haryana, against fee hike in Rajasthan, on the problems of nursing students in Karnataka are good examples. Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra too have identified the problems faced by the students in hostels and organised sustained struggles on them.
- **For industrialisation in West Bengal:** The West Bengal committee had played a good role in campaigning for the industrialisation of the state and also in the process exposing the canards that the opposition is spreading against the Left government and the party. A series of activities together with intense ideological campaign was carried out.

Organisational activities:

- A workshop for the cadre was organised in Shimla to reorient the organisation and for its expansion and strengthening. Document on organisation was prepared and was extensively discussed and adopted.
- Two schools were organised for the Hindi-speaking states in this period. These proved to be useful for developing the political understanding of our comrades and develop their organisational skills.
- A convention for the girl students was organised. This was to consolidate the recent growth of our movement among girl students.
- Six booklets on various issues were brought out and sold extensively among the students. This helped in explaining our stand among the students on some important issues like the Indo-US nuclear deal, the issue of reservations, foreign direct investment in education and the role of judiciary in education. These booklets were brought in Hindi and English by the all India centre and were subsequently translated into many regional languages.

Student Struggle: The magazine of the mass organisation is published regularly on a monthly basis. The quality of the magazine is maintained. However, the magazine has to address the issues concerning the education sector and the student community in a bigger way. The idea of bringing out a separate journal in Hindi was not realized but efforts for the same should continue. Journals are brought out regularly in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh. Some states like Tamilnadu, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are bringing out magazines in their respective states but regularity has to be ensured.

An effort has been made to bring out booklets on various issues and the effort has to continue. Care has to be taken that the books and journals brought out by the organisation are according to the consciousness levels of the target students.

The student front should build joint struggles to counter the imperialist, communal and reactionary challenges confronting the education system and the student community.

Fraction committees: The 18th Congress decided to form fraction committees instead of the student-youth sub-committee. Accordingly this change was made at the all India level and in many of the states. Generally, fraction committees are formed with the party members among the respective secretariats of the student organisation at that relevant level.

The fraction committee at the all India level is meeting regularly and is discussing policy issues and the question of party building among the students. As has been pointed out in the 18th Congress, care has to be taken to ensure that fraction committees do not replicate the work of the respective secretariats of the mass organisation but also take up the question of party building. The functioning of the fraction committees has to improve qualitatively at all levels. The fraction committees should also regularly review the work of the comrades.

Party building in the student front: Party building in the student front is still a major area of concern. Unless it is accepted that the task of building the party among the students is the task of the concerned party committees as a whole and not that of the comrades working in the students' front alone, this challenge cannot be overcome. Cadre policy is still absent and thus the dividends that the party ought to gain from the activities in the student front remain illusive. In terms of recruitment of whole timers this is a very prospective front and this fact is borne out by the history of the growth of our party. The question of expansion of the Party among the students depends on a constant effort at new recruitment. Once we examine the numbers of committee members of the student organisation from the unit committee to the highest level, we will find that there is a yawning gap between the mass organisation committee members who are potential recruits for the AGs and the actual strength of the AGs. Therefore, the relevant Party committees must concretely apply these objective criteria for recruitment to the auxiliary groups from among the members of the student organisation committees. There must be proper monitoring on this count.

The 18th Party Congress had directed to hold a meeting of the party in-charges of the student front of the states, but that did not materialize. This has to be immediately organized. The policy document adopted by the party and this meeting, if organized,

will help in developing further clarity about the functioning of the fraction committees and the relationship between the party and the mass organisation. Along with this, the party state committees should discuss the implementation of the policy document with a concrete plan of action. They should also review the work of the student front at least once in a year in the light of the 'Approach to the mass organizations' document adopted by the party.

Cadre: The 18th Congress pointed out: "The Party should recruit more young cadre at all levels, deploy them in different parts by assigning specific tasks, monitor their performance and promote them on the basis of their efficiency." The Congress also emphasized the necessity of a proper cadre policy especially for the student front as it involves sections who still are in their formative stage. Evolving a cadre policy is an urgent necessity as many comrades, some even active among those working in the mass organisation are moving out of bounds from our party and other mass organisations once they are relieved from their responsibilities in the student front.

Statement of Party Membership
(After 18th Congress)

Name of State	Year			
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Andaman & Nicobar	90	73	169	235
Andhra Pradesh	46,742	57,469	64,493	68,405
Assam	10,901	11,793	12,436	13,072
Bihar	17,353	18,686	17,413	18,644
Chattisgarh	1,054	1,327	1,376	1,499
Delhi	1,408	1,589	1,785	1,843
Goa	67	--	61	61
Gujarat	3,398	3,383	3,396	3,526
Haryana	1,608	1,690	1,618	1,881
Himachal Pradesh	1,024	1,122	1,210	1,505
Jammu & Kashmir	850	1,391	1,600	1,980
Jharkhand	3,292	3,900	5,043	4,562
Karnataka	6,492	6,980	6,515	6,653
Kerala	3,16,305	3,27,839	3,41,006	3,36,644
Madhya Pradesh	2,320	2,680	2,803	3,001
Maharashtra	10,256	11,148	11,706	12,051
Manipur	300	418	567	400
Orissa	3,658	3,817	3,508	4,620
Punjab	10,050	11,503	10,508	10,140
Rajasthan	3,120	3,498	3,774	4,263
Sikkim	75	80	80	93
Tamilnadu	94,343	1,00,610	1,00,327	90,291
Tripura	51,343	53,836	63,319	67,764
Uttarakhand	829	940	988	1,050
Uttar Pradesh	5,877	6,345	6,346	6,175
West Bengal	2,74,921	2,72,923	3,13,657	3,21,682
CC staff	87	94	95	115
Total	8,67,763	9,05,134	9,75,799	9,82,155

Age Distribution of Party Members in States

Name of State	Upto 30 years	Between 31-40	Between 41-50	Between 51-60	Between 61-70	Above 70
A & N	41 (Upto 31 years) (17.5%)		123 (32-50 years) (52.3%)		65 (51-70 years) (27.7%)	6 (2.6%)
Andhra Pradesh	15,273 (25.14%)	22,618 (37.23%)	14,553 (23.95%)	5,309 (8.73%)	2,320 (3.81%)	675 (1.11%)
Bihar	3,561 (19.52%)	3,823 (20.96%)	5,998 (32.88%)	3,648 (20%)	979 (5.36%)	229 (1.25%)
Chattisgarh	285 (18.98%)	449 (29.91%)	358 (23.85%)	323 (21.51%)	76 (5.06%)	10 (0.66%)
Delhi	279 (15.13%)	617 (33.47%)	590 (32.01%)	254 (13.78%)	80 (4.34%)	23 (1.24%)
Gujarat	386 (Upto 25 years) (10.09%)		2,887 (26-50) (81.87%)		230 (6.52%)	23 (0.65%)
Haryana	207 (12.95%)	324 (20.27%)	619 (38.73%)	338 (21.15%)	110 (6.88%)	
Himachal Pradesh	226 (Upto 25 years) (14.92%)		1,167 (26-50) (77.08%)		109 (51-70) (7.19%)	12 (0.79%)
Jammu & Kashmir	1,104 (55.75%)	436 (22.02%)	311 (15.70%)	88 (4.44%)	36 (1.81%)	5 (0.25%)
Jharkhand	751 (16.61%)	1,673 (37.02%)	1,464 (32.39%)	467 (10.33%)	135 (2.98%)	29 (0.64%)
Karnataka	1,237 (18.74%)	2,315 (35.08%)	1,994 (30.21%)	870 (13.18%)	142 (2.15%)	41 (0.62%)
Kerala	62,682 (18.61%)	1,03,442 (30.72%)	98,927 (29.38%)	45,805 (13.60%)	20,725 (6.15%)	5,063 (1.50%)
Madhya Pradesh	173 (25 years) (5.76%)	864 (26-35) (28.79%)	1,386 (36-50) (46.18%)		537 (51-70) (17.89%)	41 (1.36%)
Maharashtra	2,112 (18.12%)	3,968 (34.05%)	3,649 (31.31%)	1,403 (12.04%)	391 (3.35%)	129 (1.10%)
Orissa	1,218 (26.08%)	1,766 (37.82%)	1,182 (25.31%)	366 (7.83%)	97 (2.07%)	40 (0.85%)
Punjab	1,371 (31 years) (13.52%)		4,265 (32-50) (42.06%)		3,926 (51-70) (38.71%)	578 (5.70%)
Rajasthan	437 (13.47%)	883 (27.22%)	998 (30.77%)	490 (15.10%)	382 (11.77%)	53 (1.63%)
Tamilnadu	17,015 (18.84%)	31,115 (34.46%)	25,190 (27.89%)	11,889 (13.16%)	4,295 (4.75%)	787 (0.87%)
Tripura	5,202 (Upto 25 years) (8.96%)		40,915 (26-50) (70.51%)		10,577 (51-70) (18.22%)	1,328 (2.28%)
Uttarakhand	147 (14%)	267 (25.42%)	361 (34.38%)	251 (23.90%)	15 (1.42%)	9 (0.85%)
Uttar Pradesh	463 (9.42%)	1,158 (23.57%)	1,481 (30.14%)	1,105 (22.49%)	521 (10.60%)	185 (3.76%)
West Bengal	41,488 (13.72%)	96,375 (31.89%)	86,497 (28.62%)	55,424 (18.33%)	17,633 (5.83%)	4,790 (1.58%)

Class Composition of Party Members in States

Name of State	Working class	Agr. Labour	Poor peasant	Middle peasant	Rich peasant	Middle class	Landlord	Bourgeois
A & N	77 (32.8%)	1 (0.4%)	141 (60%)			16 (6.8%)		
Andhra Pradesh	13,699 (23.14%)	22,368 (37.78%)	12,587 (21.26%)	5,836 (9.85%)	465 (0.78%)	3,733 (6.3%)	72 (0.12%)	433 (0.73%)
Assam	2,159 (16.51%)	784 (5.99%)	6,130 (46.89%)	2,427 (18.56%)				
Bihar	899 (4.82%)	6,956 (37.30%)	7,215 (38.69%)	2,712 (14.54%)	340 (1.82%)	502 (2.69%)	20 (0.10%)	
Chattisgarh	451 (30.04%)		789 (52.56%)	29 (1.93%)		232 (15.45%)		
Delhi	1430 (77.59%)					413 (22.40%)		
Gujarat		680 (19.28%)	545 (15.45%)	95 (2.69%)		201 (5.7%)		
Haryana	481 (27.98%)	314 (18.26%)	230 (13.37%)	92 (5.35%)	9 (0.52%)	593 (34.49%)		
Himachal Pradesh	143 (9.44%)	60 (3.96%)	807 (53.30%)	406 (26.81%)	3 (0.19%)	91 (6.01%)	4 (0.26%)	
Jammu & Kashmir	230 (11.61%)	225 (11.36%)	422 (21.31%)	531 (26.81%)	152 (7.67%)	420 (21.21%)		
Jharkhand	753 (16.57%)	909 (20%)	2,173 (47.83%)	373 (8.21%)	57 (1.25%)	251 (5.52%)	27 (0.59%)	
Karnataka	2,938 (44.40%)	1,336 (20.30%)	1,615 (24.41%)	593 (8.96%)	13 (0.20%)	116 (1.75%)	5 (0.08%)	
Kerala	1,80,049 (53.48%)	83,854 (24.90%)	26,934 (8%)	35,886 (10.65%)	1,013 (0.30%)	8,645 (2.56%)	208 (0.06%)	55 (0.01%)
Madhya Pradesh	1,345 (44.81%)	288 (9.59%)	841 (28.02%)	271 (9.03%)	1 (0.03%)	254 (8.46%)	1 (0.03%)	
Maharashtra	2,098 (18.32%)	2,615 (22.84%)	6,082 (53.13%)			652 (5.69%)		
Orissa	622 (13.32%)	1,546 (33.11%)	1,388 (29.72%)	495 (10.60%)	1 (0.02%)	616 (13.19%)	1 (0.02%)	
Punjab	869 (8.57%)	4,277 (42.17%)	3,264 (32.18%)	1,022 (10.07%)	491 (4.84%)	211 (2.08%)	6 (0.05%)	
Rajasthan	1,135 (32.79%)	242 (6.99%)	545 (15.74%)	823 (23.77%)	5 (0.14%)	710 (20.51%)	1 (0.02%)	
Tamilnadu	38,721 (42.88%)	23,768 (26.32%)	9,566 (10.59%)	8,361 (9.26%)	239 (0.26%)	9,636 (10.67%)		
Tripura	12,657 (21.81%)	16,152 (27.83%)	14,989 (25.83%)	2,211 (3.81%)	142 (0.24%)	5,158 (8.88%)		
Uttarakhand	202 (19.23%)	30 (2.85%)	517 (49.23%)	120 (11.42%)	26 (2.47%)	150 (14.28%)	3 (0.28%)	2 (0.19%)
Uttar Pradesh	1,027 (22.35%)	660 (14.36%)	1,621 (35.28%)	578 (12.58%)	7 (0.15%)	697 (15.17%)	4 (0.08%)	
West Bengal	42,251 (13.98%)	56,832 (18.80%)	79,531 (26.31%)	33,527 (11.09%)	2,613 (0.86%)	74,495 (24.65%)	449 (0.14%)	

Membership Of TU Front
(After 18th Congress)

Name of State	Year			
	2002	2003	2004	2005
Andaman & Nicobar	2,417	2,242	2,287	2,727
Andhra Pradesh	2,43,594	2,25,268	2,65,359	3,07,615
Arunachal Pradesh			17,900	
Assam	58,726	56,012	60,667	59,651
Bihar	23,717	8,292	12,185	22,415
Chattisgarh	17,968	15,428	13,871	17,496
Delhi	28,308	27,003	24,339	29,511
Goa	1,147	1,174	947	551
Gujarat	7,599	8,917	8,532	12,588
Haryana	25,321	31,167	25,393	48,483
Himachal Pradesh	13,242	12,345	14,801	16,996
Jammu & Kashmir	910	6,352	6,204	6,376
Jharkhand	38,181	41,007	36,174	43,634
Karnataka	99,044	94,341	95,915	1,19,713
Kerala	10,19,507	9,49,413	9,81,416	10,69,798
Madhya Pradesh	25,220	19,309	22,017	24,005
Maharashtra	63,355	56,769	71,857	81,571
Meghalaya			1,460	
Orissa	31,749	50,222	60,997	82,885
Punjab	32,915	61,373	61,100	79,971
Rajasthan	31,840	30,116	30,168	31,228
Sikkim				370
Tamilnadu	2,78,745	2,42,328	2,73,425	3,30,856
Tripura	80,363	98,785	1,14,824	1,34,215
Uttarakhand	11,704	11,506	11,855	15,657
Uttar Pradesh	24,350	21,942	20,764	25,791
West Bengal	12,76,360	12,60,120	13,04,235	14,15,192
Total	34,36,282	33,31,431	35,38,692	39,79,295

Membership Of Kisan Front
(After 18th Congress)

Name of State	Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Andaman & Nicobar		4,000	4,693	4,900
Andhra Pradesh	1,34,373	3,00,722	2,89,620	2,82,426
Assam	1,35,878	1,78,944	1,88,554	2,31,703
Bihar	2,30,080	2,58,600	2,40,147	3,25,484
Chattisgarh	4,500	3,500	5,953	7,086
Gujarat	18,120	14,140	15,700	15,928
Haryana	21,200	20,150	25,400	37,101
Himachal Pradesh	15,533	20,015	20,750	38,339
Jammu & Kashmir	12,500	15,000	25,000	35,000
Jharkhand	30,000	22,200	35,601	70,299
Karnataka	1,18,448	1,52,782	1,51,840	1,32,634
Kerala	18,66,061	21,71,263	23,81,730	26,39,030
Madhya Pradesh	36,297	27,102	33,262	34,169
Maharashtra	1,72,147	1,75,751	2,01,114	1,90,197
Manipur	3,000	1,340	2,220	1,700
Orissa	47,759	95,000	1,07,557	77,170
Punjab	1,48,758	1,55,712	1,51,250	1,56,945
Rajasthan	44,740	71,513	1,63,543	2,41,576
Tamilnadu	3,69,705	4,38,276	4,64,300	5,09,181
Tripura (KS+GMP)	3,46,678	3,82,590	4,05,210	4,34,268
Uttarakhand	11,823	22,902	24,700	25,000
Uttar Pradesh	1,32,169	1,90,310	2,03,371	1,59,846
West Bengal	1,32,78,998	1,41,31,093	1,48,78,146	1,57,16,988
AIKS Centre	5	5	6	6
Total	1,71,78,772	1,88,52,910	2,00,19,667	2,13,66,976

Membership Of Agricultural Workers Front
(After 18th Congress)

Name of State	Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Andhra Pradesh	5,56,470	7,88,906	11,12,972	12,65,283
Bihar	88,078	1,15,360	78,310	1,36,610
Gujarat			2,500	
Haryana	17,000	14,168	14,780	18,030
Karnataka	22,979	29,997	49,310	72,689
Kerala	16,62,438	17,50,498	17,50,570	18,23,482
Madhya Pradesh	3,000	2,200	2,600	1,500
Maharashtra	55,955	60,580	74,430	83,540
Orissa	6,500	9,289	14,100	20,510
Punjab	64,741	69,670	91,485	1,02,527
Rajasthan	13,750	17,500	22,000	22,000
Tamilnadu	2,26,330	2,74,450	2,81,734	4,35,748
Tripura	1,57,770	1,76,160	1,85,501	2,01,300
Uttar Pradesh	62,250	58,000	64,370	67,535
Total	29,37,261	33,66,778	37,44,662	42,50,754

Membership Of Women's Front
(After 18th Congress)

Name of State	Year			
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Andaman & Nicobar				2,000
Andhra Pradesh	3,30,000	5,10,000	5,24,700	5,62,350
Assam	60,271	67,638	75,049	82,268
Bihar	29,948	35,000	49,070	54,157
Chattisgarh	1,500	1,450	2,000	2,330
Delhi	73,442	67,322	75,125	35,000
Gujarat	9,676	13,000	20,014	25,070
Haryana	25,440	30,500	35,000	34,600
Himachal Pradesh	3,805	5,750	9,455	10,625
Jharkhand	25,000	30,025	41,700	46,975
Karnataka	24,041	23,450	47,975	55,098
Kerala	21,97,070	24,96,342	27,54,750	30,79,360
Madhya Pradesh	8,880	13,061	12,320	15,358
Maharashtra	61,686	70,037	75,112	85,993
Manipur	3,001	3,500	3,256	2,600
Orissa	21,260	24,393	28,972	33,079
Punjab	20,000	27,814	37,400	22,100
Rajasthan	14,770	17,000	15,056	19,907
Tamilnadu	4,60,007	4,65,247	4,85,254	5,81,241
Tripura	3,35,280	4,16,200	4,44,946	4,67,525
Uttarakhand	7,100	9,650	10,200	9,110
Uttar Pradesh	39,150	51,570	60,500	60,671
West Bengal	43,73,358	47,11,816	52,79,520	58,18,701
Total	81,24,685	90,90,765	1,00,87,374	1,11,06,118

Membership Of Youth Front
(After 18th Congress)

Name of State	Year			
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Andaman & Nicobar				1,020
Andhra Pradesh	3,16,810	4,92,001	4,73,754	4,55,950
Assam	57,800	78,192	1,03,879	62,500
Bihar	1,13,450	1,07,591	1,11,471	1,52,075
Chattisgarh	7,450	1,290	12,700	11,866
Delhi	26,544	28,690	30,300	33,324
Gujarat	15,350	18,000	18,588	19,556
Haryana	9,472	10,100	13,210	12,010
Himachal Pradesh	12,353	17,432	20,852	17,614
Jammu & Kashmir	5,000	80,562	1,03,100	1,31,000
Jharkhand	28,500	26,745	32,771	42,055
Karnataka	75,187	85,162	93,330	1,02,289
Kerala	45,48,955	45,31,020	46,66,336	46,11,374
Madhya Pradesh	9,510	9,632	11,360	14,511
Maharashtra	82,907	91,684	90,585	74,985
Manipur	3,519	3,021	4,399	5,123
Orissa	34,293	35,388	34,000	40,200
Punjab	43,425	44,211	50,675	53,020
Rajasthan	53,114	41,852	60,090	76,399
Sikkim			1,500	1,500
Tamilnadu	7,68,108	7,50,196	7,79,306	8,44,875
Tripura	4,61,860	5,01,879	5,51,871	5,60,000
Uttarakhand	4,955	5,170	11,337	8,019
Uttar Pradesh	37,400	41,547	46,462	54,288
West Bengal	75,73,243	83,55,887	89,93,887	97,64,674
Centre	5	5	5	5
Total	1,42,89,210	1,53,57,257	1,63,15,768	1,71,50,232

**Membership Of Student Front
(After 18th Congress)**

Name of State	Year			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Andhra Pradesh	4,92,528	5,88,109	6,59,047	6,77,659
Assam	25,594	22,812	24,387	27,118
Bihar	27,876	26,632	26,075	26,781
Chattisgarh	Nil	Nil	1,463	10,038
Delhi	3,300	4,529	2,900	4,529
Gujarat	7,375	4,730	Nil	4,230
Haryana	13,122	14,445	14,663	12,567
Himachal Pradesh	26,926	24,751	17,995	18,517
Jharkhand	9,522	8,500	8,104	10,176
Karnataka	62,092	58,391	91,633	90,709
Kerala	8,57,729	9,23,858	9,35,312	10,29,681
Madhya Pradesh	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,420
Maharashtra	32,022	32,617	33,603	23,398
Manipur	1,025	3,825	3,314	1,912
Orissa	4,258	5,746	4,012	5,176
Punjab	8,500	11,738	11,700	10,400
Rajasthan	32,289	34,840	34,742	44,630
Tamilnadu	1,25,532	1,51,917	1,47,185	1,58,981
Tripura	1,34,482	1,37,071	1,39,169	1,55,177
Uttarakhand	8,751	11,800	7,500	8,000
Uttar Pradesh	12,283	12,281	8,558	7,417
West Bengal	13,03,482	13,98,000	14,23,377	16,09,199
CEC	72	74	74	76
Total	31,88,760	34,76,666	35,94,813	39,39,791

Circulation of *People's Democracy* and *Lok Lahar*

State	<i>People's Democracy</i>			<i>Lok Lahar</i>		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (Apr-Dec)	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (Apr-Dec)
Andhra Pradesh	801	751	553	2	3	2
Arunachal Pradesh	1	1	1			
Assam	539	566	589	9	11	10
Bihar	126	131	122	1176	1313	1346
Chandigarh	37	38	34	53	53	52
Chattisgarh	19	19	21	295	386	335
Delhi	287	368	345	541	827	763
Goa	2	2	2			
Gujarat	13	17	18	51	118	70
Haryana	32	46	39	686	897	865
Himachal Pradesh	116	103	103	538	754	676
Jammu & Kashmir	17	24	17	18	22	36
Jharkhand	32	54	54	225	356	468
Karnataka	316	259	242	3	4	6
Kerala	271	6829	10075	2	3	3
Madhya Pradesh	17	18	19	314	304	304
Maharashtra	492	572	543	476	509	497
Manipur	7	16	7			
Meghalaya	13	13	13			
Orissa	316	324	297	25	24	23
Pondicherry	13	120		1		
Punjab	116	130	124	50	67	66
Rajasthan	25	32	34	676	716	809
Sikkim	2	2		1	1	
Tamilnadu	1205	1205	2009		77	75
Tripura	597	597	1953	2	2	2
Uttarakhand	8	9	9	279	293	319
Uttar Pradesh	147	147	133	1674	1723	1672
West Bengal	7448	7448	8335	3860	4120	4567
Foreign	34	34	40			
Total	13049	23085	25733	10954	12576	12968

Circulation of *The Marxist*

State	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (Apr-Dec)
Andhra Pradesh	190	179	153
Assam	105	74	76
Bihar	29	27	35
Chandigarh	11	11	12
Chattisgarh	14	13	14
Delhi	67	173	173
Goa	1	1	1
Gujarat	1	1	3
Haryana	11	11	11
Himachal Pradesh	54	41	8
Jammu & Kashmir	23	4	9
Jharkhand	25	14	20
Karnataka	157	152	148
Kerala	127	129	89
Madhya Pradesh	3	3	5
Maharashtra	120	129	135
Orissa	135	93	88
Pondicherry	15		
Punjab	28	36	40
Rajasthan	13	9	9
Tamilnadu	254	248	235
Tripura	50	51	50
Uttarakhand	5	5	21
Uttar Pradesh	48	43	32
West Bengal	883	888	941
Foreign	7	9	13
Total	2376	2344	2321