

# CPI(ML) Central Committee Meet

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**The Party Central Committee met in Bally (West Bengal), 2729 May '07.  
We reproduce below some excerpts.**

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## The Emerging National Situation:

a) The UPA government at the Centre has completed three years. In these three years, it has failed to ameliorate the impact of the agrarian crisis. The UPA's showpiece NREGA legislation has proved ineffective and it remains ridden with irregularities and bureaucratic restrictions and distortions. On the contrary the government's SEZ policy and other pro-corporate steps like large-scale entry of big capital in the retail sector and commercialisation of health and education have generated tremendous anger and resistance across the country. On the foreign policy front too, this government stands increasingly exposed for its pro-US tilt.

The CPI(M)-led Left bloc supporting the UPA has also proved ineffective and bankrupt particularly in the context of its claim of reining in the government and pushing it into a pro-people direction. The passage of the SEZ Act remains the biggest failure of the Left bloc and the Singur-Nandigram incidents have badly dented the CPI(M)'s pretension to fight against the economic policies of the Centre. Instead, the CPI(M) and its Left allies are now known for their desperate bid to implement the central policies.

The growing popular anger against the UPA-Left combine provides a favourable ground for the BJP and NDA and the election results from Punjab, Uttarakhand and Delhi municipal elections seemed to reflect such a trend. But the UP elections have come as a big blow to the BJP. Indeed, the UP election results indicate an increased marginalisation of the two biggest national parties. The BSP has emerged as the latest and biggest choice of the ruling classes in UP and efforts are on to promote the BSP experiment beyond UP. But at the same time, the BSP government in UP will reveal its policies and class character in real life and we must make use of this material to impart effective political education to our ranks and the masses and confront the BSP on the basis of its policies and performance.

b) State repression is on the increase across the country. The Nandigram carnage, the shocking incident of police firing on Muslim people protesting the blasts in Hyderabad and most recently the

large-scale killing of rallyists demanding reservation in Rajasthan are three major pointers from three different states that are ruled by three different political formations. Assault on democratic rights has also intensified. Recent arrests of Dr. Vinayak Sen and Rajendra Sail, senior PUCL campaigners from Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh mark a growing authoritarian trend in the country. Some state governments have come up with special laws (Public Security Act in Chhattisgarh, Police Act in Bihar) to curb democratic rights and confer greater powers on the police. We must mobilise public opinion against this authoritarian trend and increased state repression and strengthen the democratic voice of protest across the country. The fake encounter cases from Gujarat and Kashmir have exposed the growing lawlessness within the top echelons of police administration and the state must not be allowed to protect the guilty and hush up the crime. The human rights movement in the country must now exert greater pressure to demand a comprehensive probe into all cases of fake encounters.

c) While the situation is maturing for the growth of powerful mass struggles, communal and fundamentalist forces are also trying to raise their ugly heads. The controversy between the Sikh clergy and the Dera Sachha Sauda has the potential to snowball into a major social turmoil and both the Congress and the Akalis are adding fuel to the fire. The blasts in Hyderabad marked a disturbing trend of terrorism that seems particularly directed against the Muslim community and its institutions. We must remain alive to this danger and take prompt initiative to thwart any attempt to whip up communal frenzy and divide the people along sectarian lines.

### **March 23-May 25 Campaign:**

After the Inquilab Rally, the campaign was continued in the form of (a) a series of commemorative programmes on 1857 in Bihar (Bhojpur, Patna, Gaya and Motihari), (b) several anti-SEZ seminars and conventions in Andhra (Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam), Orissa (Parlakhemundi, Cuttack), Tamil Nadu (Chennai, Kumbhakonam, Tirunelveli, Dharmapuri), Karnataka (Bangalore) and Bihar (Patna), and (c) May Day rally at Naxalbari followed by a Naxalbari-to-Nandigram Krishak Jagaran Yatra culminating in the May 25 rally in Kolkata.

Bihar also witnessed agitational programmes on some of the burning issues of the 10-point people's charter like chakka jam to protest large-scale exclusion of the rural poor from the BPL list and irregularities in the implementation of NREGA.

The 1857-related programmes and the anti-SEZ conventions were widely appreciated and many of these programmes witnessed a lot of cooperation and participation from friendly forces and individuals. The conventions held in Visakhapatnam and Tirunelveli were greatly successful. The ones in Dharmapuri and Bangalore also saw a lot of enthusiasm and our best ever mobilisation in those areas. In Cuttack this was our first programme and it was preceded by a visit to the site of anti-Posco struggle where the CPI(ML) delegation was warmly welcomed by the fighting people.

In West Bengal in spite of the situation turning favourable our mobilisation had steadily declined in recent years. The whole thrust of the campaign was to combine extensive political propaganda with intensive mobilisation of our own ranks. The entire party organisation made a spirited attempt in this direction and signs of a revival could be seen in the campaign and the rally. Several thousand comrades from the North-East (Assam, Karbi Anglong, Tripura), Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and even UP and Andhra participated quite enthusiastically in the May 25 rally in Kolkata. In terms of arrangements, the rallyists and organisers all had a tough time in the gruelling summer heat of Kolkata and volunteer arrangements proved inadequate.

At a time when the CPI(M) remains badly discredited, its Bengal model is facing its biggest ever

crisis of credibility, and Mamata is trying to corner the entire opposition space with assistance from some known Naxalite faces thereby fuelling the CPI(M) propaganda of Trinamool-Naxal nexus, the rally has been received as a powerful assertion of the CPI(ML) at a very appropriate juncture.

We must now keep up the momentum generated by the May 25 campaign and rally by intensifying and expanding our rural work in West Bengal, galvanising our own base and tapping the growing resentment among the rural poor and peasant masses and strongly intervening in the growing public debate in West Bengal on issues of democracy, development, industrialisation and so on. We must powerfully project our policies and politics in the Left and democratic camp of West Bengal and challenge the rightwing forces that are trying to cash in on the growing public anger.

22 April and 1 May were also an integral part of the campaign period. On 22 April a large number of GB meetings were held almost in all our areas of work. This was a good attempt to reach out to all Party members on a particular occasion with a particular task and message. Yet in big states we could not involve more than 30% of our members which shows the state of our organisational network and the average standard of our Party membership.

May 1 was observed in a grand way in Coimbatore where we have acquired a significant foothold in a big factory. A total strike involving some 4,000 workers was led for nearly three months and the strike has just ended honourably following an intervention by the state government asking the adamant management to negotiate with the union. On May Day an impressive 5,000 strong rally was taken out in Coimbatore.

As for propaganda materials, West Bengal comrades brought out two small booklets. A compilation of SEZ-related articles from Liberation has also been published. Booklets have also been printed in Hindi and Tamil to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Naxalbari. The CD released on the occasion of the March 23 Inquilab Rally has been updated with footage from the rally and subtitles in English. These propaganda materials should now be followed by a booklet in Hindi on 1857.

On the whole the March 23-May 25 campaign has been highly successful in presenting our movement and politics in its larger historical context. It has inspired our ranks not only in the struggle against the present set of anti-people economic policies and their disastrous consequences but also in our contention with the ruling classes on the terrain of nationalism by contrasting our historical roots of anti-imperialist nationalism and militant unity of the people to their history of comprador-communal nationalism and politics of collaboration with imperialism.

After March 23 Inquilab Rally, PB had called upon all Party members to contribute Rs. 5 to meet the deficit. By and large members have responded to that call but we are yet to reach out to a good section of our membership. The CC therefore calls upon all State Committees and other Party structures led by the CC to fix a week in June for organising one more series of GB meetings involving all our members where the report and experience of the entire campaign will be shared and contribution collected from all those comrades who have not yet paid Rs. 5 to the central fund. We must strengthen this culture of involving the entire membership during and after every major political campaign.

## **8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party will be held in Kolkata towards the end of this year**

The Party Central Committee took stock of the status of the Party organisation, called upon the Party to achieve membership targets with 20% women, 10% organised workers, and 5% student-youth, gear up the organisational structures at various levels including Party branches, maintain the flow the organising Party education camps at district level and growth in circulation of Party Organs.

It also drew a broad outline for the preparatory work towards the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## **All-India Anti-SEZ Convention and Rally at Kolkata**

In the past weeks, all-out efforts have been undertaken by the CPI(M)-led LF Government in West Bengal to suppress the Nandigram issue. An “all-party meeting” was announced with much fanfare in which Mamata Banerjee made gestures of ending her stand-off with the Left Front. CPI(ML) received an invitation to participate in the meeting – an invitation that was mysteriously cancelled on phone with no explanation. Mamata Banerjee walked out of the meeting purportedly adamant on her demand that the Nandigram incident of March 14 be termed a ‘massacre’, and LF partners all arguing that what happened in Nandigram was no massacre. Subsequently however, a meeting has taken place between the LF patriarch Jyoti Basu and Mamata in which it appears that Trinamool and CPI(M) are heading for a rapprochement over Nandigram and Singur. Following this meeting, Mamata was no longer insistent on Nandigram being termed a ‘massacre’.

At a time when the ruling CPI(M) and its LF partners as well as the main Opposition seem willing to close the Nandigram chapter and agree not to term it a massacre, the all-India anti-SEZ Convention and rally held at Kolkata on 2-3 June was a timely and significant assertion that Nandigram’s message to the people’s movements across the country cannot be whitewashed.

The anti-SEZ Convention, endorsed by activists of people’s movements all over the country, was held on 2 June. Participants included Arundhati Roy, Medha Patkar, human rights activist John Dayal who had recently attended a people’s tribunal at Nandigram, Varavara Rao, Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary of the CPI(ML), Santosh Rana and Vaskar Nandy of the PCC CPI(ML), Siddiquilla Chaudhury of the Gana Unnayan Parishad, Rashida Bi leading a large contingent of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy affected people, who were in Kolkata also to campaign against the proposed Dow Chemicals factory in West Bengal.

Addressing the Rally that culminated at the Esplanade Metro on 3 June, Dipankar Bhattacharya said that the Convention and Rally was an assertion that Nandigram cannot be suppressed – no matter whatever doublespeak or eyewash of all-party meetings the LF Government resorts to. He reminded the rallyists that when masses of people including a large number of Muslims had rallied against the UPA Government’s capitulation to the pro-US foreign policy over Iran, the Prime Minister had responded by terming it an attempt to “communalise” India’s foreign policy. At Nandigram when Muslims had joined the struggle against land grab, once again they were branded as “communal” by the CPI(M). But anti-imperialist people’s struggles will defy such communal attempts to penalise the participation of Muslims, and Muslims will continue to fight on all issues as equal citizens. Referring to the attempts by some opportunist forces like the Trinamool who try to raise the ‘Lal Hatao’ slogan in the wake of Nandigram, he said it was true that the ruling CPI(M)-led LF had indeed tarnished the red flag – but we cannot forget that it was the left ranks at Nandigram – the true bearers of the legacy of the red flag, that have set up a national model in the struggle against SEZs.

The Convention concluded with the setting up of an all-India Consultative Committee on anti-SEZ protests, of which CPI(ML) activists are also a part. The Convention had issued a call by concerned citizens ‘In the wake of Nandigram’, declaring “The valiant struggle of the peasantry in Nandigram against the acquisition of their land and homesteads for the proposed chemical hub SEZ has drawn nationwide attention. Despite the massacre of March 14 and the continuing reign of terror unleashed by the police and the hired killers of the ruling party in the state, Nandigram has remained defiant and refused to surrender. On the contrary, it has sparked unprecedented mass protests across West Bengal and elsewhere. People’s movements in various parts of the country against the forcible acquisition of farmlands, forests and other natural resource base of the poor in the name of SEZ and for the so-called industrial projects have also drawn inspiration and sustenance

from Nandigram.”

**The Convention called for a nationwide movement on the following demands:**

1. Scrap the SEZ Act, 2005 that aims to set up ‘extra-territorial’ authorities within the country and acquire huge tracts of farm and forest lands for the corporate capitalists while endangering the lives and livelihoods of millions.
2. Abolish or reformulate (in consultation with the people) the colonial and draconian Land Acquisition Act of 1894 that serves as the chief instrument of land acquisition by the government.
3. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, who has owned up to the responsibility for the mass murders in Nandigram, must resign. Everyone who has had a hand in the Nandigram massacre, directly or indirectly, must be punished.
4. People’s institutions at the grassroots must be allowed the autonomy to act so that a life of peace and dignity returns to Nandigram and wherever conflict has erupted over land acquisition.

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**P.S.**

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