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Crores on propaganda shows rulers desperate: Azad, CPI(Maoist))

Comrade Azad, spokesperson, central committee, CPI (Maoist), talks about why his party has called for an election boycott, how it plans to implement it, why Left-led Third Front government is out of the question as they are trying to brand themselves secular only to grab power. Azad spares no one, whether it is L K Advani, Congress, Mayawati or Prakash Karat, calling them opportunists.

This is one of the biggest elections with about a billion voters participating. Don't you see it as people's growing faith in parliamentary democracy?

Certainly not. Every day, media, central and state governments and all contesting parties are dinning into the ears of people to exercise their vote. This shows the desperation of the ruling classes. Crores are being spent on propaganda alone. They are so scared that they cannot imagine allowing voters the minimum democratic right to reject parties and candidates contesting the elections.

Your party has called for poll boycott. But involvement of people in elections seems to be growing.

There is neither any interest nor involvement of people in the elections. Even the narrow base of some parties has taken a beating this time. Contrary to images you see on TV, the involvement of people has declined compared to earlier elections. Hence, the desperate attempt by rulers to rope in film stars, cricketers and popular personalities into publicity campaigns to educate people regarding the virtues of parliamentary democracy, and about the great responsibility of citizens in casting their votes.

Left parties are trying to build a non-BJP, non-Congress alternative at the Centre. What is your view on the Third Front?

The Third Front forged by CPI and CPM as a secular democratic front comprising non-Congress, non-BJP forces is actually a congregation of self-seeking discredited opportunists, all of whom have proved to be hypocrites and double-dealers in their respective states. Who needs to be taught about the infamous history of a Chandrababu Naidu, a Jayalalitha, a Mayawati, a Deve Gowda, a Naveen Patnaik? These leaders and their parties, who had, at one time or the other, shared power with the Hindu chauvinist BJP, are being given secular-democratic image by the Left.

The Karats, Yechuris and other power brokers of the so-called Left had churned out the slogan of anti-communalism to justify their alignment with the most loyal agent of imperialists, Congress, during the 2004 elections. Now, these opportunists see anti-communalism in parties like TDP, BSP, AAIDMK, JD(U) and BJD, all of whom had never really demarcated themselves from

communal BJP, and have no compunction in striking an alliance with it if it gave them a share in power. For our Marxist ideologues, all these forces have suddenly become secular. One should not be surprised if they once again become the tail of Congress after the election.

Why do you say that?

Just see. They found secularism, anti-imperialism and democratic moorings among parties such as TDP, a party which was first to transform a state into a laboratory of the World Bank and is responsible for the murder of over 2,000 Maoist revolutionaries besides the high-level of corruption of the regime led by Chandrababu Naidu. There are other opportunists such as Jayalalitha's AIADMK that had become infamous for the scale of corruption, abuse of power and fascist suppression of people's struggles in TN; Naveen Patnaik's BJD has sold the state to imperialists and proved itself to be executioner for the imperialists by massacring adivasis in Kaliga Nagar, POSCO, etc, besides protecting saffron hoodlums as they went about killing, raping and persecuting Christians. Deve Gowda's JD(S) shared power with BJP and broke with it only when the latter wanted a greater share of power; you have Mayawati who would do anything to grab power whether it be power-sharing with the BJP on rotational basis, or striking an alliance with Brahmins and subordinating Dalits to upper-caste Hindus, besides crushing all opponents ruthlessly.

The Third Front has certainly weakened the two major alliances, NDA and UPA, and has led to further fragmentation of Indian polity.

How will you take your boycott campaign to the people?

We began after EC declared the poll schedule. Our stand has been made clear to people through circulars, press statements, interviews, leaflets, posters, wall writings. Cultural teams stage performances among the people. We will carry this out till the last phase of elections. It also includes questioning candidates and party members, gheraoing them, making them confess their misdeeds before the people.

Then there is active boycott where we prevent candidates from carrying out their campaigns in villages and smaller urban centres in our areas. We warn the parties not to venture out into our areas. When they do not heed our warnings, we stop their campaign, beat them up if they are notorious elements, burn their vehicles, conduct people's courts where possible and make the party representatives confess the misdeeds of their respective parties and seek apology from the people. They are let off after they agree not to come to the villages again. We carry out counter-offensive actions against police and central forces who are used by the reactionary rulers to enforce elections at gun-point. Basically our active boycott too is a political campaign though we undertake some actions aimed at destroying enemy forces.

What about the growing impact of regional parties?

The elections this time are the most complex, most crisis-ridden and most fragmented. Extreme instability and contradictions plague every party and candidate. No party or candidate seems to be certain of the poll outcome. Hence they are resorting to all sorts of gimmicks to attract the apathetic voter. The desertion by the Left, Lalu's RJD, Mulayam's SP, Paswan's LJP, Ramdoss's PMK have left Congress and the UPA in a pathetic condition. Likewise, BJP and its NDA allies

have lost support of strong allies like BJD, AIADMK and several smaller parties. Neither BJP nor Congress is in a position to hold their respective alliances together and centrifugal tendencies will continue to weaken these further.

What is the alternative Maoists are offering to parliamentary democracy?

The alternative is people's democracy where it is the people, and not a few moneybags, who decide the destiny of the country and their own lives. It is genuine democracy as seen from the grassroots level to the top and not vice versa. You can see e grassroots democracy at work in the vast tracts of Dandakaranya where Maoists are running a parallel government. There, people are supreme and decisions are made through gram sabhas, assemblies of the people and not by invisible hands. The people's courts, of course, will be refined further but the content remains the same, deliverance of real and speedy justice by taking the side of the oppressed, persecuted people.

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