



THE LEFT FRONT'S UN-DEVELOPMENT REPORT CARD
PART II:
THE TRUTH BEHIND THE LEFT FRONT'S
FALLACIOUS COUNTER-CLAIMS

APRIL 24, 2009

All India Congress Committee
24, Akbar Road, New Delhi
www.aicc.org.in

The Indian National Congress issued a document on April 5, 2009 titled “**30 Years of Left Front Rule in West Bengal: A Development Report Card**”. The document laid out some bare facts on key development indicators that showed the failure of the Left Front in West Bengal on various fronts.

In response to that document, West Bengal’s Finance Minister and Left Front leader, Shri Ashim Dasgupta issued a selective rejoinder on behalf of the Left Front, claiming that the report was “completely bogus”, “not based on credible facts” and “politically motivated”. Since Shri Dasgupta’s rejoinder – available on the CPI(M) website: <http://vote.cpim.org/node/1296> – rebuts only a few of the facts presented in the Report Card, **one can only presume that he and the Left Front plead guilty to the other allegations** made in the Report Card.

As far as the rebuttals offered are concerned, Shri Dasgupta has chosen to either mislead the public by providing denying verified reliable facts or by presenting additional unrelated and data. In this note, we provide the truth behind the false claims made by the Left Front in it’s rebuttal.

1. The Left has alleged that the Report Card presented “questionable findings of privately funded studies of small sample”

Reality: The Left Front’s claim is false; it demonstrates either complete inability to verify facts, or a blatant attempt to mislead the public. The Report Card presented data from a number of highly credible public sources, citing data from Left leaning economists, reports published by the Left Front’s own government agencies in West Bengal as well as agencies of the Government of India. For example, the following sources were used in the Study:

- a. Jean Dreze, widely acknowledged to be a Left-leaning economist who published his findings in the prestigious Economic and Political Weekly
- b. West Bengal Government: “West Bengal Human Development Report 2004”
- c. Government of India: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Rural Development, National Crime Records Bureau (Ministry of Home Affairs)
- d. Planning Commission of India; "National Human Development Report 2001"
- e. Economic Census 2005
- f. National Family Health Survey III, 2005-06

Does the Left Front consider government data sources to be “privately funded” and “questionable”? The people of West Bengal deserve an answer.

2. The Left has alleged that “The charges leveled by the Congress that 14 districts of West Bengal falls under the top 100 poorest districts of India are completely baseless and frivolous as the source of this is unknown”

Reality: The Left Front seems to be complete denial of facts as the results are highly embarrassing to the State government. The Report Card clearly mentioned that the source of the data was a “2009 Study by Indian Statistical Institute for the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI); based on analysis of NSS Data”. Since the Left Front seems to be in denial of this Report, here are some more details:

The study uses National Sample Survey (NSS) data, conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) which provides the best known and most reliable known estimate of poverty in India. The Study has an all-India sample size of 1,24,644. It's a source that is often cited by the Left Front when the data is to its advantage.

Does the Left Front consider the National Sample Survey Organisation, which it often cites in its own analysis, to be an unreliable source of data? If so, will it scrap the organisation if it comes to power? The people of India deserve an answer.

3. The Left has alleged that “Figures that are used for hunger are based on perception and not on scientific and objective criteria”

Reality: It seems that 30 years in government has made the Left Front too arrogant to acknowledge the voice of the silent poor of rural Bengal, dismissing it as mere “perception”. The poor in rural Bengal have spoken in their own voice and in large droves that they are hungry (West Bengal has the highest incidence food scarcity among major Indian states) but the Left has chosen to dismiss this as mere “perception” and “not scientific”. It must also be noted that the hunger data presented in the Report Card comes from a Study conducted by a Left-leaning economist, Jeane Dreze, who the Left Front has often cited in its favour on several occasions in the past. Today, it has chosen to disassociate itself from a report by the same economist, just because it indicts the Left Front government in West Bengal.

Does the intellectual and academic elite of the Left-front want the poor hungry citizens of rural Bengal to provide scientific evidence of their hunger and malnutrition? The rural poor of West Bengal deserve an answer.

4. The Left has alleged that “the Report, given its motivations, has carefully avoided any detailed discussion of agricultural performance”

Reality: It is true that the Report did not dwell upon agriculture, sparing the Left Front further embarrassment. But since the issue has now been raised by the Left, we put just one fact on the table for the public to dwell on: **95.4% of rural agricultural labourers in West Bengal get paid wages below the National Minimum Wage¹. This is one of the highest non-compliance among Indian states and much higher than the national average.** So much for the Left Front's claim of serving the poor rural farmer of Bengal.

Why has the Left Front failed to give even the minimum decent wage to the poor landless farmer of Bengal? The landless farmers of Bengal deserve an answer.

¹ NSS 61st Round 2004-05 data cited in the “Report on the Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector”, 2007