

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: IND30099
Country: India
Date: 11 April 2006

Keywords: India – Kerala – Communal Violence – RSS – Communists

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

1. Can you provide information on conflicts between RSS and Communists in the state of Kerala?
2. Can you provide information on clashes between Communists and BJP members in the same state?

RESPONSE

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The sources indicate that there have been regular incidents of conflict over the years in Kerala between members of the *Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh* (RSS) or the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), and members of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). However, few recent reports of incidents were found, and the local elections which took place at the end of 2005 were largely peaceful, although there were various allegations by the BJP that the CPI-M had threatened candidates. Sources indicate that the RSS and BJP have comparatively little influence in Kerala, and that they have never managed to gain political power in the state. Political power in Kerala has tended to alternate between the Congress Party-led coalition called the United Democratic Front (which is in power at present) and the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (which is currently in opposition).

Three RRT Research responses examine politics in Kerala, and contain relevant material.

A January 2005 response includes at pages 4-6 a discussion of politics in Kerala. Although it does not specifically mention clashes with the CPI(M), it does include material on incidents

of sectarian violence involving the *Sangh Parivar* movement (which includes both the RSS and BJP) which took place in a Muslim area in the village of Marad in 2004 and resulted in five Muslims and one Hindu being killed. It states that the *Sangh Parivar* movement is growing in Kerala, but that because there is such a large percentage of non-Hindus in the states (with 45% being either Christian or Muslim) the BJP has found it difficult to gain power (RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response IND17161*, 7 January – Attachment 1).

Question 3 of a 2002 RRT Research Response looks specifically at violence by the BJP or the RSS against members of the CPI-M or its youth wing the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DFYI). It also examines violence by the CPI-M against RSS members, and indicates that both sides have been responsible for such incidents at various times. There is a selection of news reports and reports from the websites of the two sides (RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response IND15152*, 28 May – Attachment 2).

A May 2002 RRT Research Response looks at political violence in Kerala, and includes incidents involving Communists, but not the BJP (RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response IND15162*, 21 May – Attachment 3).

A selection of articles from the past two years, by R. Krishnakumar for the Indian magazine *Frontline*, is attached. These discuss recent relevant aspects of politics in Kerala:

- A December 2005 article states that the BJP “wants desperately to break the stranglehold of the two coalitions, led by the CPI(M) and the Congress” but has not managed to convince even its supporters to vote for it in large numbers. It has been reduced to encouraging its voters to support the Congress Party against the CPI(M), its main rival (Krishnakumar, R. 2005, ‘On a suicide mission’, *Frontline*, Volume 22, Issue 26, 17-30 December, <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2226/stories/20051230005801500.htm> – Accessed 11 April 2006 – Attachment 4).
- An October 2005 report states that the CPI-M led Left Democratic Front has been sweeping local elections, which is significant given that state assembly elections are taking place in 2006. Violent incidents are not mentioned (Krishnakumar, R. 2005, ‘Kerala’s choice’, *Frontline*, Volume 22, Issue 21, 8 October, <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2221/stories/20051021003603700.htm> – Accessed 11 April 2006 – Attachment 5).
- Another October report on the local elections states that “the BJP was struggling to find candidates in all the constituencies and its State president, P.S. Sreedharan Pillai, dropped a bombshell by announcing in public that nine of the 14 District Congress Committee presidents in Kerala had approached his party to seek support for Congress candidates in the elections” (Krishnakumar, R. 2005, ‘Another round in Kerala’, *Frontline*, Volume 22, Issue 20, 7 October, <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2220/stories/20051007003003600.htm> – Accessed 11 April 2006 – Attachment 6).
- A March 2004 article examines the growth of the RSS and BJP in Kerala and other states, and at the cultural activities it has undertaken there. The CPI-M is not mentioned in this report (Krishnakumar, R. 2004, ‘The spread in the South’, *Frontline*, Vol 21: Issue 06, March 13 – March 26

<http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2106/stories/20040326004900900.htm> – Accessed 6 January 2005 – Attachment 7).

The following recent reports are from other Indian newspapers, and contain some references to violent incidents:

- A November 2005 report states that a Lok Sabha by-election took place peacefully ('Kerala by-poll ends, high voter turnout' 2005, *Hindustan Times*, 18 November – Attachment 8).
- An October 2005 report states that in the village of Perambra in northern Kerala there were attacks by CPI-M activists against BJP activists ('CPI(M) blamed for violence at Perambra' 2005, *The Hindu*, 27 October – Attachment 9).
- A September 2005 report states that the BJP had accused the CPI-M of using "muscle power to prevent opposing parties from fielding their candidates" in local elections, stating that they were importing the Bengali-style tactics into Kerala ('CPI(M) importing `Bengal model': BJP' 2005, *The Hindu*, 20 September – Attachment 10).
- A July 2005 report states that the BJP president accused the CPI-M of "leading Kerala to Stalinism" and of using its affiliated organisations to stir up violence ('BJP condemns CPI(M) stand on counselling' 2005, *The Hindu*, 3 July – Attachment 11).
- An April 2005 article comments that "in north Kerala, the BJP and RSS traditionally stand together to take on the CPI(M) in battles that regularly leave dozens killed or maimed on either side". But there had been times when the BJP and the RSS turned against each other ('Indian Express: In a Kerala town RSS once hunted BJP' 2005, *Indian Express*, 17 April – Attachment 12).
- A January 2005 report states that after the tsunami hit the state of Kerala, the RSS and the CPI-M worked "in tandem" with other voluntary organisations to "clear up the place" ('Voluntary Organisations come up to cleanse Kerala' 2005, *Hindustan Times*, 11 January – Attachment 13).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response IND17161*, 7 January.
2. RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response IND15152*, 28 May.
3. RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response IND15162*, 21 May.
4. Krishnakumar, R. 2005, 'On a suicide mission', *Frontline*, Volume 22, Issue 26, 17-30 December. (<http://www.flonnet.com/fl2226/stories/20051230005801500.htm> – Accessed 11 April 2006)
5. Krishnakumar, R. 2005, 'Kerala's choice', *Frontline*, Volume 22, Issue 21, 8 October. (<http://www.flonnet.com/fl2221/stories/20051021003603700.htm> – Accessed 11 April 2006)
6. Krishnakumar, R. 2005, 'Another round in Kerala', *Frontline*, Volume 22, Issue 20, 7 October. (<http://www.flonnet.com/fl2220/stories/20051007003003600.htm> – Accessed 11 April 2006)
7. Krishnakumar, R. 2004, 'The spread in the South', *Frontline*, Vol 21: Issue 06, March 13 – March 26. (<http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2106/stories/20040326004900900.htm> – Accessed 6 January 2005)
8. 'Kerala by-poll ends, high voter turnout' 2005, *Hindustan Times*, 18 November. (FACTIVA)
9. 'CPI(M) blamed for violence at Perambra' 2005, *The Hindu*, 27 October. (FACTIVA)
10. 'CPI(M) importing `Bengal model': BJP' 2005, *The Hindu*, 20 September. (FACTIVA)
11. 'BJP condemns CPI(M) stand on counselling' 2005, *The Hindu*, 3 July. (FACTIVA)
12. 'Indian Express: In a Kerala town RSS once hunted BJP' 2005, *Indian Express*, 17 April. (FACTIVA)
13. 'Voluntary Organisations come up to cleanse Kerala' 2005, *Hindustan Times*, 11 January. (FACTIVA)