

ANOMALIES IN CRITERIA, SAYS PARTY

CPI(M) protests EC move to take away national party tag

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 18 JUNE

THE CPI(M) has decided to challenge the Election Commission's move to divest the 33 MP-strong party of its national status by questioning the anomalies in the recognition/derecognition criteria.

Speaking to reporters in Hyderabad on Sunday, politburo member Sitaram Yechuri acknowledged the receipt of a notice from the EC seeking clarifications on "why the national party status (of the CPI-M) should not be stripped."

"We will contest the decision as there are some anomalies in the derecognition criteria," Mr Yechuri said, adding: "Parties having representation from smaller states and Union territories are considered for national status, while we are having to face the derecognition threat despite ours being the third largest party in Parliament."

Saying that the "CPI(M), which is in power in three states, has 33 members in the Lok Sabha and the majority of the members are from West Bengal and Kerala," Mr Yechuri added that the party "will put forth its argument soon" in its letter to the EC.

The EC's notice to the CPI(M) is in keeping with the standard procedure which requires for a party's status to be reviewed on the basis of its electoral performance. With the CPI(M) recording a dismal performance in the September 1999 Lok Sabha elections by polling barely 1.4 per cent of the total valid votes and returning only 2 MLAs in the simultaneous Assembly poll in Andhra Pradesh, the party no longer fulfilled the criteria for recognition in four states.

As per the rules laid down for recognition, a party must be recognised as a state party in four states to qualify for the "national party" tag.

The EC letter asked the Marxists to reply by July, following which a hearing will be held in August to give the party a chance to put forth its views on the issue. It is only after the hearing is over that the Commission will pronounce its verdict on recognition/derecognition.

The Economic Times

19 JUN 2000