

## Government's survival will be known on June 25: Left

India's Left parties kept the heat on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government Friday with CPI-M general secretary Prakash Karat stating categorically that its survival would be decided on June 25 when the UPA-Left nuclear committee meets.

As the Left firmed up its stance on the India-US nuclear deal, it got an opportunity to sharpen its attack on the government with inflation hitting a 13-year high at 1.05 percent. The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) politburo issued a scathing statement, accusing the Congress-led government of failing to curb rising prices.

For the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, it seemed to be a rapidly escalating crisis.

"We will come to know whether this government will survive or not on June 25,' Karat told reporters here, referring to the meeting of UPA-Left nuclear committee, which is to take a final decision on the contentious India-US civil nuclear deal.

Although the four-year-old government continued its efforts to wriggle out of its worst-ever political crisis, the refusal to budge from their position on both sides on the nuclear agreement kept alive the prospects of an early general elections.

Karat was scheduled to meet External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee Friday evening for the third time this week in a bid to overcome differences over the contentious deal.

An adamant Left said there was no change in its opposition to the deal and it would not allow the government to go to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna for finalising the India-specific safeguards agreement - a crucial step to take the 123 agreement forward.

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) politburo member S. Ramachandra Pillai told IANS: "We will go to the president (Pratibha Patil) if the government goes ahead with the deal and tell her that we do not support this government."

Addressing a seminar organised by the Students Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the CPI-M, Karat said: "We hope this government will complete its term (of five years). Efforts are being made for that.'

However, sources in the CPI-M, which along with three other Left parties extends crucial legislative support to the government, made it clear that they will spare no quarter to stall the deal. "We will do everything necessary to stop the government from signing the 123 agreement," said a party politburo member.

According to Left sources, UPA allies like the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and DMK were wary of facing early polls even though they had backed the government publicly on the deal. "Inside closed-door meetings, they have asked the government to keep the Left on board."

The Congress dug in its heels and reiterated its resolve to stand by the prime minister.

'We are not letting down our prime minister in any manner whatsoever,' senior Congress leader and

Information and Broadcasting Minister P.R Dasmunsi told a television channel.

The rising inflation added the proverbial fuel to the fire.

Karat indicated that his CPI-M and its allies, which prop up Manmohan Singh's government, would intensify their opposition to the government's policies and its failure to bring down the inflation.

"The prime minister had earlier said that this was not a single issue government," he said, indicating that the government was neglecting its other priorities.

In its statement, the CPI-M politburo said double-digit inflation would have a 'disastrous effect' on the living standards of the people.

'The Manmohan Singh government is squarely responsible for this dismal situation. It cannot escape by blaming global inflation.'

Congress' ally Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar Friday met Karat to discuss the nuclear deal impasse. Although there were reports that the prime minister had asked Pawar to convince the Left about the deal, the agriculture minister denied it.

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