

PEASANTS' STRUGGLE

JUNE-JULY 2021





May 26-Black Flag Day observed at AIKS Central Office



May 26- Effigy of Modi government being burnt at Rohtak on Black Flag Day

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FOREWORD

For the last three months, the country is passing through the biggest health crisis since independence. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the country's health system to its knees. The failure of the government in managing it further deepened this crisis. There was an atmosphere of fear and panic everywhere in the country. Suddenly in the month of April the number of infected patients with Corona virus rapidly increased from hundreds to thousands and from thousands to lakhs. People were running for oxygen, ventilators, hospital beds, medicines and other essential items for their relatives and friends. The government failed miserably in providing these necessities.

There were also reports of hiding the death figures from across the country. The government was engaged in managing and hiding the data instead of doing Covid management. To hide the number of deaths, efforts were made to hide the cremated and buried dead bodies. All limits of humanity were breached when thousands of dead bodies started appearing floating in the river Ganga. Even then, the BJP government callously kept declaring that everything was fine.

On the one hand, restrictions were imposed on the general public in the name of the Corona pandemic in a draconian manner infringing on their rights. On the other hand, the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and BJP were responsible for super-spreader events gathering crowds where no Covid-19 protocols were followed. Even during the elections they failed to provide adequate protection to polling officials and more than one thousand five hundred teachers on election duty are reported to have died of Covid in Uttar Pradesh. In Uttarakhand, the Centre allowed a massive Kumbh Mela of lakhs of people at Haridwar, and this also became a super spreader.

The pro-corporate, anti-people and totally unplanned vaccine policy of the central government first denied free and universal vaccination to all citizens. It was only as a result of the Supreme Court verdict, and pressure by the opposition Chief Ministers and the people, that the Modi government was forced to change its track. But the profligate and obscene Central Vista project still continues. No one knows what has happened to the completely opaque and non-accountable PM Cares Fund.

In this time of Covid, when the central government and most of the state governments failed in dealing with this pandemic, the LDF government of Kerala proved its efficient management and provided better health and livelihood facilities to lakhs of people despite having limited resources. It was the efficient leadership of the Government of Kerala that provided relief to the people in two severe floods, then during the Nipah virus outbreak and now in the Corona pandemic. Because of this, in the recently held assembly elections, the people of Kerala expressed their confidence once again in the LDF government, which returned to power with an even bigger majority. For the first time in the last 44 years, a state government was re-elected for a second term in Kerala.

On June 26, it will be seven months for the lakhs of farmers who are sitting on the borders of Delhi in protest against the three farm laws and for a law to guarantee MSP and procurement. But the Modi government is not even ready to negotiate with them. It is the pro-corporate and egotistic bent of the Modi government, due to which it does not even want to talk to the farmers on their demands.

The BJP has lost the state assembly elections badly in Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal. It has been defeated in the local body elections in Uttar Pradesh, and earlier in Punjab. Farmers had taken a campaign of "No Vote to Anti-Farmer BJP" which was received well in these states. State assembly elections are due early next year in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Farmers are today standing tall and are warning the Modi government that "Those who don't bow will be broken down!"

SKM'S NATIONWIDE CALL TO 'SAVE AGRICULTURE, SAVE DEMOCRACY' ON JUNE 26

MILLIONS DENOUNCE MODI REGIME IN HISTORIC

NATIONWIDE ACTION ON MAY 26

- Dr Ashok Dhawale

On June 14, 2021, the historic farmers' struggle completed 200 days. It has been the largest and longest peaceful struggle not only in India, but also perhaps across the world. The number of peasant martyrs at the Delhi borders since November 26, 2020, has crossed the 500 mark.

JUNE 26 – 'SAVE AGRICULTURE, SAVE DEMOCRACY' DAY

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), in its general body meeting on June 11 held at the Singhu border near Delhi, gave a nationwide call to 'Save Agriculture, Save Democracy' on June 26. That day marks the completion of seven months of the farmers' struggle. It is also the 46th anniversary of the imposition of the hated Emergency by the then authoritarian Congress government in 1975. The SKM has pledged to fight the undeclared Emergency of, and the trampling of democratic rights and civil liberties by, the present fascist BJP government. The day also marks the death anniversary of the legendary peasant leader and Founder President of the AIKS, Swami Sahajanand

Saraswati, who passed away in 1950. The SKM also gave another important call to observe June 24 as Kabir Jayanti, after the great rational and egalitarian saint.

On June 26, dharnas will be held outside the Raj Bhawans in every state and a memorandum addressed to the President of India will be submitted to the Governor. There will also be similar demonstrations at the district and tehsil levels. An appeal was made to the trade unions, and to organizations of agricultural workers, women, students and youth to join these protests. On June 15, the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions (CTUs) promptly released a press statement supporting the SKM call for June 26. It was a welcome development. The CTUs and the SKM have always supported each other's struggle calls, in the spirit of worker-peasant unity.

On June 9, at the SKM call, the martyrdom anniversary of the renowned anti-imperialist tribal peasant leader Birsa Munda and the Sikh warrior Banda Singh Bahadur were widely observed.



DELHI HC JUDGMENT BOOST FOR DEMOCRACY

In the context of the SKM's June 26 'Save Democracy' call, the struggle for democracy got a big boost on June 15, when a division bench of the Delhi High Court comprising Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anup J Bhambhani delivered a momentous judgment granting bail to UAPA-incarcerated anti-CAA student activists Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Asif Iqbal Tanha. These were three of the many that have been falsely implicated by the powers that be in the Delhi riots case, while the real BJP culprits who actually incited the riots are roaming scot free.

Among the many memorable and seminal passages in this judgment are the following: "It appears that in its anxiety to suppress dissent and in the morbid fear that matters may get out of hand, the state has blurred the line between the 'right to protest' and 'terrorist activity'. If such blurring gains traction, democracy would be in peril...Protests against governmental and parliamentary actions are legitimate; and...it is not uncommon for protesters to push the limits permissible in law...Considering, however, that the right to protest is a fundamental right that flows from the constitutionally guaranteed right to assemble peaceably and without arms enshrined in Article 19(1)(b) of our Constitution, surely the right to protest is not outlawed and cannot be termed as a 'terrorist act' within the meaning of the UAPA."

Two days before this judgment, on June 13, the Left-leaning Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ektu Ugrahan) organised a public meeting at the Tikri Border near Delhi, in defence of democratic rights and demanding the release of all those human rights activists, intellectuals and students who have been vindictively jailed by the BJP-RSS central government under draconian laws like UAPA, NSA, Sedition Act and so on. They include the 16 Bhima Koregaon detenus, students of JNU, AMU, Jamia Millia, and journalists, film makers and cartoonists critical of the government. Despite heavy rains, hundreds of farmers, both women and men, attended.

The public meeting was presided over by BKU (EU) President Joginder Singh Ugrahan. The main speakers were the nephew of Shaheed Bhagat

Singh, Prof Jagmohan Singh, AIKS President Dr Ashok Dhawale, noted writers and playwrights Dr Sukhdev Singh Sirsa, Dr Sahib Singh, Navsharan Kaur, Gulzar Pandher, Jaspal Mankhera, N K Jeet and others. AIKS Finance Secretary P Krishnaprasad also attended.

All the speakers denounced the fascistic, authoritarian, communal, pro-corporate and anti-people character of the Modi-Shah government, giving numerous examples of the same. They demanded the immediate release of all those unjustly arrested without trial and sometimes even without charge sheets being served for over three years. They also called for making the June 26 'Save Agriculture, Save Democracy' nationwide call of the SKM a great success.

LARGE NATIONWIDE ACTIONS ON JUNE 5/6

Within ten days of the massive nationwide actions of May 26 (outlined in these columns later), to mark six months of the farmers struggle and the All India working class strike, and the completion of seven years of the disastrous Modi government, another set of nationwide actions took place on June 5/6, as per the call of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM).

June 5, 2020 was the day that the BJP central government first promulgated the three hated Farm Ordinances, which were converted into laws after ramming them through Parliament in September, by murdering parliamentary democracy. The other significance of that day was that, it was on June 5, 1974 at a massive rally in Patna that the great democratic freedom fighter Jayaprakash Narayan gave his famous call for a 'total revolution'. The nationwide mass movement that began then ended three years later, in March 1977, with the people of India ousting the Indira Gandhi-led Congress government's Emergency regime in the general elections. June 5 also happened to be World Environment Day.

June 6, 2017 was the day when the BJP government of Madhya Pradesh led by Shivraj Singh Chauhan killed six farmers in police firing at Mandsaur. They were leading a concerted struggle for remunerative prices and loan waiver. It was to condemn the martyrdom of these farmers and to take forward the issues that they had raised that over 200 farmers organisations from across the country, including the AIKS, came together and

formed the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC). The AIKSCC went on to lead two massive actions of the peasantry in Delhi in November 2017 and November 2018. The AIKSCC was the nucleus around which several other large farmers organisations came together in October 2020, the SKM was formed, and the unprecedented farmers struggle began a month later on November 26, 2020.

On June 5, lakhs of farmers at the Delhi borders and throughout the country made bonfires of the three Farm Acts at thousands of places in almost all states. This action showed once again that the farmers struggle is by no means restricted to the Delhi borders. Like the JP movement which led to the downfall of the Congress regime, the farmers resolved to work for the downfall of the BJP regime. To mark World Environment Day, trees were planted at thousands of places. On June 6, farmers across the country paid homage to the Mandsaur martyrs and also to the martyrs at the Delhi borders, and took a pledge to strengthen the struggle for their rights.

HISTORIC NATIONWIDE ACTION ON MAY 26

It was a culmination and a catharsis of all the emotions that had welled up in the hearts and the minds of the people of India during the last seven years of this oppressive regime. May 26, 2021 will always be marked in history for the massive participation of millions of people across the country in the Black Flag Day to denounce the cruel and heartless attitude of the Narendra Modi-led BJP-RSS government towards the ongoing historic struggle of farmers under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), at the Delhi borders and throughout the country.

May 26 marked the completion of six months of this unprecedented farmers' struggle, six months after the glorious all India strike by the working class, and seven years of the Modi-led BJP-RSS government, by far the most disastrous that India has had since its independence. On May 21, the SKM sent a strong letter to the Prime Minister demanding that the government resume talks with farmers, failing which the struggle would be further intensified.

The call for observing Black Flag Day and burning effigies of the Modi Government was

observed in tens of thousands of places and in millions of households from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Gujarat to Guwahati, and beyond. Literally thousands of photographs and videos of this action in villages and bastis from every state in the country started flooding the social media sites of the SKM, AIKSCC, AIKS and other farmers' and workers' organizations since morning. The rage of the people was particularly reflected in the videos of the effigy burning. Millions of houses, shops, vehicles, tractors and trolleys hoisted black flags of protest. Multiple hashtags in support of the movement trended throughout the day on social media platforms.

That such a massive countrywide action took place despite the deadly second wave of the Covid pandemic was by itself highly significant. In view of the pandemic, the organizers had themselves warned against big centralized mobilizations, with a call to restrict them only to villages and bastis. People everywhere also took great care to maintain all the Covid protocols.

The Black Flag Day call was given by the SKM and was supported by the Central Trade Unions, 12 major opposition political parties, and numerous class and mass organizations. They included the AIKS, CITU, AIAWU, AIDWA, DYFI and SFI. Peasants, agricultural labourers, workers, middle class employees, women, students, youth, traders, professionals, intellectuals, cultural activists and journalists took part in the protests with great determination. The tremendous response represented the legitimate anger of the people against the Modi regime.

The Black Flag Day was observed at all the Delhi borders at Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur, Shahjahanpur and Palwal by hoisting black flags on trolleys and tents, and effigies of the Modi government were burnt. The protest sites saw the numbers swell significantly, with thousands more joining the protest. The sheer determination and tenacity of lakhs of farmers at the borders must be universally hailed. This prolonged massive struggle may well be a world record. The farmers have kept up the struggle for six long months, despite bitter cold, drenching rain and scorching heat, and have also braved severe repression and nasty defamation by the BJP-RSS and their agents. There have been over 500 farmer martyrs in the last six



months. But Modi, like Nero, still keeps fiddling as India burns, with peacocks for company!

A black flag and effigy burning protest action was held at the AIKS-AIAWU-SFI central office at New Delhi. It was attended by AIKS General Secretary Hannan Mollah, President Ashok Dhawale, Joint Secretary Vijoo Krishnan, Finance Secretary P Krishnaprasad, CITU Secretary A R Sindhu, AIAWU Joint Secretary Vikram Singh, AIDWA General Secretary Mariam Dhawale, Joint Secretary Asha Sharma, CEC members Maimoona Mollah and Archana Prasad, SFI Joint Secretary Dhineet Dhenta, and PSM leader Dinesh Abrol, among others. In a press release, the AIKS congratulated the people on the outstanding success of the May 26 struggle.

May 26 this year also happened to be Buddha Poonima. Truth, peace and non-violence were emphasised as the key values and principles of the ongoing farmers' movement. Buddha Poonima was also suitably celebrated at the Delhi borders and throughout the country.

CONDEMNING THE PRO-CORPORATE NEOLIBERAL TRAJECTORY

The May 26 nationwide protest was centered on two main issues. The first set of vital issues dealt with the Modi government's attack on the working people and on the wealth of our country, in order

to shamelessly pander to the domestic and foreign corporate lobby, represented by the Ambanis and the Adanis, whose profits and wealth have grown exponentially during the pandemic, even while millions have sunk into destitution.

Repeal of the three anti-people Farm Laws and the four anti-worker Labour Codes, withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill, central legislation to guarantee procurement of crops at an MSP of C2 + 50 per cent, as recommended by the National Commission on Farmers headed by Dr M S Swaminathan, halt to the reckless privatization drive to sell off the public sector and the country, opposition to the constantly cascading prices of diesel, petrol and gas, and expansion and wage increase in MNREGA – these were the main demands of the May 26 protests.

The nakedly pro-corporate policies of the Modi-led BJP government, which are aimed at selling off the whole country under cover of the hypocritical slogan of 'atmanirbharata' have made things much worse. There is almost no sector in India which the Modi regime has not put up for privatisation and sale to Indian and foreign corporates – be it railways, airlines, airports, ports, mines, telecom, public sector, banks, insurance, irrigation, power, education, health, and even defence. Now it is agriculture and land which is on its hit list. And this is being bitterly opposed.

The true significance of the ongoing historic farmers' struggle throughout the country is that it strikes squarely at the disastrous, anti-national, neo-liberal policies of the BJP-RSS regime, which has always acted as the most servile agent of the corporate and imperialist lobby, right from the days of our glorious freedom struggle. It is a patriotic struggle waged by millions of farmers not only for themselves, but also in defence of the people and of the entire country.

In a fundamental sense, the May 26 protests were in defence of sovereignty, democracy, secularism, federalism, and social and economic justice – in a word, India's Constitution itself.

DENOUNCING MODI REGIME'S CRIMINAL CULPABILITY ON COVID

The second major issue was the sheer criminal culpability of the Modi-Shah regime while dealing with the Covid pandemic. According to the official figures as of June 20, 2021, the total number of Covid cases in India has crossed 3.00 crore, and the number of Covid-related deaths has crossed 3.89 lakh. But the actual count is estimated by experts to be at least five to ten times higher. Tens of thousands have died in the Covid second wave, many of whom could have been saved. Thousands lost their lives due to lack of oxygen, ventilators, medicines and hospital beds. Crematoriums and cemeteries have been overflowing. Thousands of bodies were seen floating in the Ganga river. This prompted Gujarati poetess Parul Khakhar to pour her heart out in her iconic poem 'Shav Vahini Ganga', which has become viral in all national languages.

The public health system has almost collapsed due to lack of priority and funds, especially in the rural areas. Private hospitals and black marketeers are literally fleecing the patients. Instead of providing oxygen, vaccines and medical facilities on a war footing, the Modi regime is pursuing its obscenely profligate Central Vista project. No one knows what has happened to the opaque and unaccounted PM Cares private fund with perhaps thousands of crores of rupees.

The vaccine policy of this government is shamelessly anti-people and pro-corporate. Free, universal and quick vaccination to all has been

denied. Cash-strapped and GST share-denied state governments have been told to buy vaccines from the global open market by the central government, which has shamelessly washed its hands off its responsibility. As a result of all this, vaccine shortages abound all over the country, increasing the dangers of a third wave.

Despite the statewide lockdowns and consequent huge job losses, free rations had been declared by the Modi regime for only two months, and these have also not reached the people in several places. It has refused to give direct cash transfers to the needy. The nation's economy is in the doldrums. The full year GDP growth for 2020-21 has been a disastrous minus 7.3 per cent. All these issues, along with the Covid-related demands that were pinpointed in the letter to the PM by 12 opposition parties, were highlighted in the May 26 protests.

The SKM, after warmly congratulating the people for the great success of this struggle, concluded its press release on May 26 as follows: "Even though the farmers' agitation has had to continue for six long months so far with many hardships, including the martyrdom of more than 500 farmers, with the protestors prepared to continue for however longer it takes, the determination and resolve of the farmers remains strong and firm. Government of India can choose to remain unwise in stretching this longer without resolving the demands of the farmers, but this would be at its own loss, and at the expense of BJP's supporter base."

The erosion of the BJP's supporter base has already begun, as seen in the results of the state assembly elections in Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal, and also in the three tier panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh, and the earlier municipal elections in Punjab. Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab will be having their state assembly elections by March 2022. The farmers of these three states and the SKM will leave no stone unturned to ensure a resounding defeat of the BJP in these elections. When that happens, it will be a game changer not only for the current historic farmers struggle, but also for the future of our country.

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ON THE COMPLETION OF SIX MONTHS OF THE KISAN MOVEMENT

-Hannan Mollah

The longest, largest, most united and peaceful Kisan struggle since Independence has been continuously gaining in strength. We completed 100 days of the struggle on March 6th 2021. The farmers showed unprecedented unity, determination and strength while facing several difficulties in winter cold, rain and now burning heat. As the anti-peasant Modi Government did not allow them to come to the Capital, they are seating peacefully at five borders of Delhi- Singhu, Tikri, Gazipur, Palwal and Shahjahanpur in thousands. The Punjab farmers played a historical role in this movement and they were joined by farmers from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Many farmers also joined from different points of the country despite lack of train services due to the pandemic. They were facing various difficulties and about 480 farmers lost their lives so far in this movement. But they announced that, in spite of Government apathy, repression, natural calamities, and serious sufferings they would not leave the movement till they achieve success in repealing the 3 black Acts, getting a proper MSP Act, withdrawal of Amendments to Electricity Act and anti-farmer Environment rules.

The Government attacked the movement from different angles. Severe oppression was unleashed through lathi charge, teargas, water cannon, digging national highways etc. in the beginning. They created many difficulties for protestors at different Dharna places by disconnecting electricity, water supply, not cleaning sanitation facilities and sending agents to create troubles. The Government and the Sangh Pariwar unleashed a malicious campaign against the movement by using the corporate “**Godi**” Media. It propagated falsehood blaming the Kisans as Khalistanis, Maoists, Pakistani agents, Chinese agents, traitors obstructing army supply, a movement organised by political parties, and what not. There was the sinister conspiracy on Republic Day, using their agent provocateurs and the

unfortunate incidents at the Red Fort was used to blame the Kisan leaders and implicate them in false cases. But all these efforts only exposed the anti-farmer policy and practices of the Modi-Shah regime.

The disciplined, peaceful and organised Kisan movement drew the attention of the people of India and abroad. We got support and praise from different sections of the people in our country. We got support from Indians working in over a hundred countries of the world. Even well-meaning democratic world opinion and international media extended their sympathy and support to our struggle. Most important support comes from the Indian working class. From the day one, the CITU and all Central Trade Unions (CTU) - extended active solidarity to our struggle and workers marched shoulder to shoulder with the peasants. The central body of 10 national trade unions supported the Kisan movement and extended all cooperation by joining directly in our struggles in Rasta/Rail Roko, Bharat Bandh and rallies. Many of the unions/federations even extended financial assistance to the movement. The workers themselves were under severe attack by the Modi Government. All the labour laws were repealed and 4 labour codes were passed to make the workers, the slaves of the corporate/MNCs. All their rights were taken away by these codes. There was massive privatisation of Public Sector Undertakings and Government was selling all the national assets to the private companies, Indian and foreign. Workers were fighting against these attacks and supporting the farmers’ struggle. The joint meetings of kisan and Trade union leaders – Samyukt Kisan Morcha and CTU were held and it was decided to fight against anti-peasant and anti-worker policies of Modi Government jointly. A new horizon of worker-peasant unity was opened which will definitely strengthen our democratic movement.

All sections of people stood by this historical

struggle. All women organisations extended support and mobilised large number of women for protest actions including on the Women’s Day at the borders of Delhi. Huge number of women farmers joined this movement and mobilised support of women all over India. The youth and students extended support and took part in this movement. They worked as volunteers to help the movement all through and also played a significant role in spreading the message of the struggle on social media and through different solidarity actions. The other sections of toiling masses, the oppressed Adivasis and Dalits and different organisations representing them stood by this movement. The intellectuals, writers, artists, lawyers, scientists, journalists etc. also came out in support of the kisan movement. All these support strengthened the morale of the kisans and the movement continued to gain courage. The corporate “Godi” media was used by Modi Government to propagate falsehood against us, but a good section of the media, especially the print media highlighted the struggle and criticised the stubborn, anti-farmer attitude of the BJP Government.

The first hundred days was full of activities by kisans at Centre as well as in different parts of the country. Two Bharat Bandhs were organised during that period and about 30-35 crores people including peasants and workers participated in each of these actions. Rail Roko was organised and in hundreds of places all over India, people in thousands at each spot stopped trains. Then again Road Roko was held and all the National Highways were blocked by kisans and people. Innumerable protest meetings at villages and block level, rallies at district and state levels were organised during that period.

The inhuman, anti-democratic fascistic Government did not pay any attention to these protests. So SKM called to intensify the movement and organised Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) outer ring road blockade on the hundredth day. It was a great successful resistance and protest against the Government apathy. During this phase the Government held meetings with kisan leaders and 11 round of talks were held but the Government tried to impose their decision to amend some sections of the Acts. The SKM totally rejected their farcical proposal. These Acts were entirely anti-farmer and merely cosmetic changes cannot improve them. When the source of the Ganga—the Gangotri itself is polluted the Ganga cannot be clean. We demanded repeal of these Acts totally lock, stock and barrel. The Government stopped discussions and since January no meeting was held. The BJP Government was only propagating falsehood. The PM claimed he was only a phone call away from the farmers. But the phone call never came. The real purpose of the Government was to tire out the movement and frustrate farmers to force them to leave the struggle front. The SKM believes only sincere talks can resolve the problem and were always ready for discussion but the Government was only cheating the people by their false propaganda. To counter their conspiracy kisans took a massive campaign and decided to continue the struggle till their demands were met.

As the movement prolonged due to the BJP Government’s conspiracy, the SKM had to take several programmes to keep the struggle alive. There is no earlier precedent of such a long and united massive movement. So we had to evolve tactics to continue it and carry on effectively.



Agricultural season of harvesting and sowing would require that some of farmers would have to go back to the villages. This would affect the mobilisation at the borders and the corporate media was likely to take a high-pitched campaign claiming that the movement was losing steam. This was tackled by ensuring that during that period students, youth, workers, women and elderly came in big numbers and after farming season the peasants returned back in larger number. Some variation in numbers was not a sign of weakness of the movement but a tactical approach to accommodate the cultivation needs of the peasantry, prepare and facilitate their participation for the long haul. This understanding has helped to keep the movement going on without any break and also in strengthening it.

The Central Kisan committee (CKC) of the AIKS assessed the situation and decided to expose Modi Government's pro-corporate, anti-people policies. The CKC noted that the united kisan movement created a split in the NDA, some of their constituents such as Akali Dal left the NDA and some others openly criticised the Government policies. It also noted that the kisan movement created lot of enthusiasm among all sections of democratic, secular people and inspired the democratic movements in the country. To strengthen that, AIKS decided to intensify its work, strengthen unity of all class and mass organisations and also the unity of left and democratic kisan organisations and expand the movement as a Pan-Indian movement. A series of programmes were taken by SKM. On 8th March, Mahila Kisan Day was observed and thousands of women were mobilised in support of kisan movement. On 15th March, an anti-privatisation, anti-corporate day was observed jointly by SKM and CTU. To explain our issues to the people at large, series of Kisan Mahapanchayats were organised in many states in which lakhs of people took part. Different meetings were organised online also. AIKS organised 3 Padayatra from Mathura to Palwal, Hansi to Tikri and Katkar Kalan to Singhu in which hundreds of kisan participated. SKM also campaigned against BJP with the slogan of "Defeat Anti-Farmer BJP" in the Assembly elections held recently. On 24-25 March Central Trade Unions called for protest against 4 Labour Codes and 3 Agricultural Acts and

kisan organisations participated in the campaign. On 26th March, again a Bharat Bandh call was jointly given by SKM and CTU. This was widely observed in the whole country except in election-bound states. On 8th May an online public meeting was organised in which AIKS, CITU and AIAWU national leaders spoke. In spite of massive lockdown and unprecedented spread of COVID-19 in different parts of the country, we organised so many programmes, adhering to the COVID protocol.

In the meantime the BJP Government hatched a new conspiracy and some of BJP leaders went to courts for removing the struggle sites. Violent goons of BJP/RSS tried to create trouble in the borders. A massive police operation was planned by the Yogi Government of Uttar Pradesh at Gazipur border. Some RSS goons and BJP MLAs came to intimidate and forcibly evict the farmers. But the farmers were determined to face any attack. They resisted and angry farmers came in thousands to Gazipur, Singhu and other borders putting up a massive resistance that made the Sanghi goons and the police to retreat. This gave new strength to the movement.

The massive spread of corona pandemic in the whole country created difficulties. The failure of the BJP Government to make adequate preparations to deal with the second wave of Covid-19 created a new dangerous situation in the villages. Lakhs of people were victims but there were no mass-testing and shortage of hospital beds, ICU, Oxygen led to big increase in death rate. Vaccination was most important to contain the pandemic but due to callous approach of the BJP Government no adequate vaccines were available. The rural masses in most States have been left to fend for themselves. The second wave has affected rural areas in a big way and poor rural people. The peasants, agricultural labourers, artisans are the main victims. Apprehensions of rising deaths, many of which are unreported are also there. A massive universal free vaccination of all is the urgent need. Medical facilities should urgently be developed. Due to pandemic and lockdown, people lost jobs and incomes. They have no purchasing power and the SKM demanded that Government should give Rs.7500/- per family per month to all non-tax paying people in addition to free ration so that they

could survive. The SKM also demanded that the Government should come forward to discuss with the farmers and solve their problems.

The movement completed six months on 26th May 2021. This day would mark the completion of 6 months of the Delhi Chalo Movement, the General Strike and Rural Hartal (26th November, 2020) and the completion of 7 years of Modi Government's misrule. So SKM gave a call for observing "**BLACK DAY**" on 26th May all over the country. Crores of Indians took part in this protest day called by the SKM and CTUs supported by the women's organisations, student-youth organisations, different class and mass organisations as well as 12 political parties. Black flags were raised on houses, offices and vehicles in all villages, towns and cities to protest against Modi Government's all-out failure in all spheres of life. Effigies of Narendra Modi were burnt and massive campaign was organised against BJP Government's policies. Despite difficulties due to pandemic and lockdown crores took part in the movement while adhering to COVID protocol.

The united kisan movement in the last six months has many lessons for us. This has been described globally as the longest and biggest movement of the peasantry in recent history. It is unparalleled in India ever since Independence. Lakhs of kisans joined the movement, from Punjab, Haryana, UP, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand around Delhi at all borders and sat in Dharna at 5 entry points of the capital. Thousands joined from Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and other states. Every state saw massive protests too. A large number of kisan organisations successfully built up the broadest ever united front in the country involving more than 500 organisations to create an unprecedented issue-based unity. The AIKSCC and SKM are leading this movement and there have been no differences among the different organisations on the issues and movement. The movement faced severe repression by the BJP-NDA Governments at centre and in states but it remained absolutely peaceful. Such a long, large and united movement maintained peace at all costs which was not experienced before. Farmers were disciplined, determined and united in the face of

so many provocations, attacks, and conspiracies. The never before unity of workers and peasants during this struggle is also unique. All sections came out in support making it a truly people's movement. The BJP Government's arrogant anti-peasant attitude has led to the movement getting prolonged. Any democratic Government should take the initiative to talk and solve the problem of its citizens but that could not happen due to the pro-corporate, authoritarian nature of the Prime Minister, BJP Government and fascist Sangh Parivar. Talks are at a stand-still since 22nd January, 2021 though the SKM made it clear that the discussion was the only way to come to a solution.

The farmers have been betrayed by Narendra Modi and the BJP Government. They took a series of anti-people, anti-worker, anti-peasant actions to facilitate corporate profiteering during their 7 years of mis-rule. They remained unconcerned to people's needs and ignored people demands. They suppressed the democratic movements and used state power to silence any dissent. All democratic, secular and popular movements were sought to be suppressed. The only concern of BJP and the Prime Minister was in winning election by any means including by creating communal and casteist division. Kisans proved in the just concluded elections that they were not only "annadata" but also "vote data" and expressed their anger through the ballot in against these policies. The SKM appealed to the farmers to vote against BJP and punish them as they failed to solve the problem of the kisans. The election results show that a large number of peasants voted against BJP and ensured their defeat in three major states. This was also evident in Panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh. The slogan of "Defeat Anti-Farmer BJP" and campaign for the same would continue in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The peasantry in unity with the toiling masses will ensure that the BJP will be defeated. That is important for ensuring that the demands of the struggle are met. The SKM is determined to take their struggle until victory. The programmes of the movement would be taken up to strengthen this kisan struggle all over the country. The "**Black Flag**" Day on 26th May is an inspiring beginning of that long phase of struggle.

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AGRARIAN CLASSES RALLY BEHIND LDF PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN ITS HISTORIC VICTORY

- VIJOO KRISHNAN

The people of Kerala have given a historic mandate to the CPI-M led Left Democratic Front and for the first time in decades re-elected an incumbent Government with an even bigger margin. It was a massive mandate for the five years of developmental activities, social welfare measures and pro-people policies implemented by the Government led by Com.Pinarayi Vijayan. The people of Kerala lapped up the Left Democratic Alternative put forward and effectively implemented in the last five years overcoming the extraordinary crises - the two floods, drought, Ockhi cyclone, the contagious and deadly Nipah virus as well as the present COVID Pandemic. The fact that the achievements of the LDF Government came when the Central BJP Government led by Narendra Modi discriminated against the State by not giving even its legitimate share of funds or GST and despite the disruptive role of the Congress led UDF and the BJP led NDA as well as all reactionary communal and casteist forces in the State makes the victory all the more special. It was a resounding rebuff of the working class against the BJP Government's attempt to snatch away the hard-won rights of workers. This victory also exemplified a trend of the agrarian classes rallying around the LDF in support of the Left Alternative in agriculture and in support of its consistent opposition to the 3 anti-farmer laws brought by the BJP Government led by Narendra Modi. This was a trend that was also visible during the elections to the Local Self Governing Institutions that concluded only a few months before and even more clearly during the Assembly elections.

The agrarian classes of Kerala have sent a loud and clear message that they want the repeal of the anti-farmer, pro-corporate Acts and this mandate was their way of strengthening the on-going historic Kisan struggle. A general consensus across agrarian classes seems to have developed in favour of the LDF. The election of leaders of Kerala Karshaka Sangham Com.K.N.Balagopal, State Secretary, Com.M.M.Mani, Central Kisan Committee

Member, Com.C.H.Kunhambu, State Joint Secretary, Com.Murali Perunelli, State Joint Secretary, Com.A.C.Moideen, Com.Kunhahmedkutty Master, Com.D.K.Murali, Satta Committee members, Com.Kelu, Adivasi Kisan leader and leader of Adivasi Kshema Samithi, Com.M.V.Govindan Master, Joint Secretary, All India Agricultural Workers' Union, Com.O.S.Ambika, Kerala Karshaka Thozhilali Union leader, Com.K.Radhakrishnan, Convenor, Dalit Shoshit Mukti Manch, election of leaders of different Kisan organisations as LDF candidates and the near total sweep of the rice bowls of the State as well as the high ranges and plantation regions are a clear indicator of such a consensus having emerged.

How did such a consensus emerge among the agrarian classes? How did the LDF manage to effectively take their campaign amidst them? What alternatives implemented by the LDF helped such a campaign?

The primary factor that helped in building such a broad consensus was the alternative agricultural policies implemented by the Pinarayi Vijayan led LDF Government. The consistent position of the Kerala Karshaka Sangham and Kerala Karshaka Thozhilali Union by rallying other organisations of the peasantry firmly against the BJP Government's effort to unlock the doors for corporate profiteering, the active participation of thousands from Kerala in the struggle sites around Delhi in bitter cold and massive District level Dharnas, tractor rallies, torchlight processions, human chain etc., created the atmosphere. Even in the run-up to the Assembly elections there were Kisan Maha Panchayats held in Malappuram, Palakkad, Kozhikode and Alappuzha districts in which national leaders of AIKS and leaders of Samyukta Kisan Morcha participated explaining the reasons for defeating the Congress led UDF or BJP led NDA. A separate "No Vote for Anti-Farmer BJP" campaign was also held by constituents of the SKM even braving attacks by Sangh Parivar goons. The

unique campaign of lighting an installation with the slogan “Stop Corporate Loot of Peasants and Workers Aided by the Congress and BJP” in Mananthavady and different meetings in the plantation regions had a big impact. The moving of a Resolution in the Assembly against the 3 Anti-Farmer Acts and its unanimous passing also was rightly seen as a steely resolve of the LDF.

Left Alternative to the BJP Government’s model of facilitating corporate profiteering at the expense of the farmers and workers also won a lot of acclaim within and outside the State. It became a talking point in meetings of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha in different States. The fact that the LDF Government even during the pandemic and Lockdown set aside Rs.3,600 crores for the Subhiksha Keralam programme for transforming agriculture and promoting cooperative agriculture stood in sharp contrast to the BJP Government’s effort to corporatize agriculture. The procurement price of paddy in the State is Rs.2,800/Qtl i.e. Rs.932/Qtl more than the centrally announced MSP of Rs.1868/Qtl. The base price of rubber was increased from Rs.15,000/Qtl to Rs.17,000/Qtl providing a big support to over a million rubber cultivators. The LDF Manifesto promise of a support price of at least Rs.250/Kg for rubber also was in tune with the popular aspirations of the rubber cultivators. The results in the rubber growing regions were an expression of their trust in the LDF promises.

The State has announced base prices for vegetables which is also first in India. In a move coming as a big relief to coffee growers they will now get Rs.9,000/Qtl for coffee berry while it was only having an average price of about Rs.7500/Qtl and linked with promotion of value addition in coffee and promotion of Wayanad Coffee as a special Brand of the Coffee farmers. It has set aside Rs.25 crores for this purpose. This is for the first time any Government in India is making an intervention to ensure that the surplus generated through value addition out of agriculture produces can be ploughed back to the farmers by avoiding direct exploitation by the corporate forces and their intermediaries. It is significant that these crops face volatility due to linking with fluctuating world market prices and Central Government’s faulty trade policies like Free Trade Agreements which allow dumping of cheap products from

ASEAN and other countries. This is an alternative policy intervention highly relevant in the context of the on-going farmers’ struggle across India.

The LDF Government invested a lot for the welfare of fish workers and fishing community, coconut growers and dairy farmers. A Welfare Fund for the MGNREGA workers has been announced in addition to the already existing Welfare Funds for Agricultural Workers and Farmers. The Social Welfare Pension which the State is providing to about 60 lakh people has been increased to Rs.1,600/month and the manifesto promises to increase it to Rs.2,500/month. Free rations and food kit comprising all essentials like different varieties of pulses, oil, sugar, spices, soaps and other provisions in addition to food grains for more than 87 lakh beneficiaries started during the COVID lockdown has been extended further. No other State in India has such a scheme. All these acted as factors in the LDF victory.

Kerala has the glorious legacy of peasant struggles for land rights, proper wages and against all forms of oppression which led to the election of the first Communist Party led Government in 1957. It was followed immediately with far reaching land reforms, protection of rights of tenants and agricultural workers. The present electoral victory puts the onus on the LDF to carry forward that legacy. Building on the gains of the land reforms, redistribution of land to the landless and socially oppressed sections coupled with strengthening of the cooperative sector to intervene in production, processing, value addition, marketing and ploughing back of surplus to farmers and workers to ensure remunerative prices and appropriate wages will help consolidate this victory. It will ensure that the agrarian classes and sections that newly rallied around the LDF will not remain a one-election phenomenon, they will continue as the biggest strength of the LDF. The elected members representing the agrarian classes will come up with innovative interventions and do justice to the mandate they have received. They are all having wide experience of being part of struggles and understand the agrarian scenario well. Their experience will help in shaping the LDF Government’s agrarian policies in the next five years. The LDF Government’s steps are being eagerly looked up to by the peasantry in India.

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FARMERS' STRUGGLE AND IMPENDING ANTI-CORPORATE FRONT

- P KRISHNAPRASAD

The farmers' struggle at the Delhi borders has completed six months. The massive participation with steely resolve and determination of the struggling farmers has marked a splendid chapter in the history of post-Independence India. The combined initiative by three organisations, namely the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWU), and Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), and the consistent efforts of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) for the last three years has helped to create the milieu to build this agitation to the present stage by bringing together over 500 kisan organisations across the country under the banner of the Samuykta Kisan Morcha (SKM). These three class organisations still have to play a significant role in shaping the destiny of the farmers' as well as the workers' struggle.

The initiative and collective effort undertaken by the Punjab Kisan organisations is remarkable in mobilising tens of thousands of farmers at the Delhi borders and converting the farmers struggle into a people's struggle. The most significant factor in their success is raising the consciousness of the peasantry on their right of remunerative Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops and developing the anti-corporate character of the struggle. They also succeeded in explaining the consequences of the three Farm Acts in the context of the agrarian relations existing in Punjab, in forging the widest issue-based unity among the peasantry and championing the idea of worker-peasant unity.

Worker-Peasant Unity

The SKM has been able to mobilise the peasantry through new and innovative forms of struggle across the country and expose the mischievous propaganda that it is merely a struggle of farmers from Punjab. The Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions (CTUs) has come forward to support the farmers' struggle all over India based

on the concept of worker-peasant unity. They are also effectively raising the demand to repeal the three Farm Acts and a central law to guarantee a fair MSP, along with their main demands of repealing the four Labour Codes and stopping the privatisation of Public Sector Units.

The Anti-Corporate Global Struggle

It is a matter of satisfaction that in the history of the post-Independence period in our country, this extensive form of worker-peasant unity has been accomplished against corporate exploitation. In the context of the systemic crisis of world capitalism akin to the Great Depression of the 1930s, the contradiction between Imperialism and Socialism remains as the main contradiction. Along with that, the contradiction between imperialism and the people of the third world countries is intensifying.

In this background, the ongoing workers' as well as farmers' struggle in India, shall be considered as part of the growing resistance of the workers and peasants all over the world against the corporate forces representing International Finance Capital and Imperialism. We shall extend worker-peasant unity all over the world and spearhead the struggle against imperialism.

By expanding the successful model of anti-corporate struggle in Punjab to boycott the products and services of the Ambani and Adani groups, and open the Toll Plazas, the common people have been actively involved in this struggle. By launching a pan India struggle we must take the message of this struggle to each and every household all over India.

Significance of Local Agrarian Issues

There is a need for a shift in outlook in order to develop the ongoing struggle as truly pan-India in character. The present nature of struggles in

various states, which are in the nature of solidarity programmes in support of the farmers' struggle at the Delhi borders, must be changed. Similar to the struggle in Punjab, all the state level Kisan movements have to assess the situation in the respective states and identify the concrete demands to rally the peasantry at the state level as well as district level. Through mass participation in these struggles, the identified demands of the state can be achieved along with the all India demands of repeal of the three Farm Acts and recognition of the MSP for all crops as the legal right of farmers. The state-level Kisan movements have to grasp and embark on this challenge politically.

The respective state units of the three organisations have to the anti-corporate message to all the villages and towns in India, thus making this worker-peasant struggle a people's movement. In the coming months, through regular public meetings, both virtual and physical, at state, district, town and village level they have to ensure massive participation in this vibrant campaign. They have to organise public meetings through social media to ensure the participation of the worker-peasant masses at the ground level.

Taking Worker-Peasant Struggle into the Stage of Political Struggle

The vaccine policy of the Modi Government exposes how the corporate policies make the life of toiling people awful. The Supreme Court has sharply criticised the Modi Government for its vaccine policy that is aimed at facilitating corporate black marketing and profiteering in the international as well as the domestic market,

though Rs.35,000 crore is available in the Union Budget to provide free vaccines to all the people. The farmers are on the path of struggle against imposing the same policy of deregulation that will facilitate black marketing of rice and wheat to potatoes and essential food commodities. Since the Modi Government is rigidly reluctant to change its policies, the SKM had put forward the slogan of Punish BJP, Defeat BJP in the elections and argued that the only option left in front of the people is to change the Government. The farmers' struggle has been one of the reasons for the defeat of the BJP in recent state assembly elections in Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal, and also in the local body elections in Uttar Pradesh. If the farmers' struggle continues for a longer period, that will create a centre of attention for more and more sections of the people to join the anti-corporate front.

There are limitations for enhancing the participation of farmers to expand and intensify the struggle during the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdown period. Hence this period can be utilised for expanding the coordination among the workers and peasants up to the town and village level, bringing together all the mass movements of students, youth and women and various sections like petty producers, traders and all other such sections that face continuous exploitation and are thus willing to join the anti-corporate front and to carry out the widespread anti-corporate campaign through social media. At the same time, the SKM leadership is considering various proposals of organising padayatras from village to district centres culminating in huge rallies and organising a Mass Parliament March and Mass Assembly Marches to make the struggle truly pan-India at the appropriate time.

In the context of the systemic crisis of the world capitalist system, the intensifying worker-peasant struggle in India, the massive participation in it and the peaceful nature of such mass protests inspire the workers and peasants the world over to build similar struggles. The world political situation is heading towards a new environment that will facilitate to overthrow the neo-liberal model of imperialist globalisation and advance towards a new world where we have nothing to lose but our chains. We are fortunate to live in this era of struggles and let us share this messzge widely. □



LAND OWNERSHIP BY WOMEN IN RURAL INDIA

- VIKAS RAWAL

Land is the most important asset and the key means of production in an agrarian society. Ownership of land is an important determinant of the class position of rural households. Ownership of land provides security against poverty and destitution as land is not only the key means of agricultural production it is also the most valuable collateral for obtaining credit.

Over the last two decades, the extent of landlessness in rural India has seen a significant rise. Recent national surveys have found that between 40-50 per cent of rural households in India do not own any land.

Among the households that own some agricultural land, land is mostly registered in name of men, and inherited and transacted among them. Personal/family laws, laws governing inheritance and sale of agricultural land, and land reforms laws in most States of India have had provisions that are discriminatory against women. Personal laws provided legal sanction to discriminatory traditional practices through which women were excluded from inheriting joint ancestral property, and their rights to sell, mortgage, gift or bequeath property were limited.

Over the last few decades, there have been some important national and state-level amendments to these laws. In 2005, some of the most discriminatory provisions were amended in the Hindu Succession Act of 1956. There have also been some important state-level amendments. For example, the 1976 Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act removed discriminatory provisions related to joint holdings. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu enacted state-level amendments to the 1956 Hindu Succession Act in the 1980s and Karnataka enacted an amendment to the Act in the early 1990s.

Along with these changes in statutory provisions, administrative provisions such as lower stamp duties have been introduced in many states to encourage registration of land in name of women or jointly in name of men and women.

While these amendments and administrative provisions are important, the political will to effectively implement them has been lacking. Customary practices of inheritance, patriarchal social order and unequal power relations between men and women have all worked as barriers against effective implementation of these legal and administrative provisions.

Consequently, in reality, barring a few matrilineal communities, not many women own agricultural land. National Family Health Surveys (NFHS), which are large, nationally-representative surveys, provide useful statistics on ownership of agricultural land. In the fourth round of the NFHS, conducted in 2015-16, a question was asked about whether agricultural land of the household was registered in name of men, women or both. Data from this survey show that, in the country as a whole, land titles for 89 per cent of the landowning households were only in name of men (Table 1). The land titles were in the name of women in only 8.2 per cent of landowning households, and were shared by both men and women in 2.1 per cent of landowning households. Two States, Meghalaya and Kerala, where some communities and castes have a tradition of matrilineal inheritance of land, stood out in respect of proportion of households where land titles were in name of women. In Meghalaya, 78 per cent of landowning households and in Kerala 32 per cent of landowning households had land registered in name of women (alone or jointly).

Table 1 Proportion of landowning households with land titles in names of women (singly or jointly), 2015–16 (per cent)

State	Per cent
Andhra Pradesh	17.0
Assam	7.3
Bihar	7.7
Chhattisgarh	11.1
Goa	19.8
Gujarat	8.2
Haryana	5.5
Himachal Pradesh	19.4
Jammu and Kashmir	5.1
Jharkhand	8.4
Karnataka	14.8
Kerala	32.0
Madhya Pradesh	9.2
Maharashtra	9.9
Manipur	8.6
Meghalaya	77.6
Mizoram	15.3
Nagaland	18.6
Odisha	7.2
Punjab	7.3
Rajasthan	7.2
Sikkim	5.1

Tamil Nadu	10.6
Telangana	17.9
Tripura	13.3
Uttar Pradesh	10.9
Uttarakhand	14.7
West Bengal	6.6
Union Territories	12.8
All-India	10.3

Source: Based on National Family Health Survey, 2015–16

These statistics show that the exclusion of women from ownership of agricultural land remains widespread in India. Gender inequality in ownership of land is rooted in patriarchal social order, is legitimised through adherence to customary practices, and enforced through weaker political position of women in the society. These social and political conditions have made statutory and administrative provisions for promoting land rights of women ineffective.

It is clear that, while ownership of land is fundamental for empowerment of women in an agrarian society, bringing about a change in respect of gender discrimination in ownership of land cannot but be a part of a larger process of political change that creates conditions for equality in ownership and control over means of production. Struggle for land rights of women thus has to be fought as part of the struggle for agrarian reforms and for democratic political change in favour of working people. □



AIKS PUTS FORTH SIX SPECIFIC DEMANDS TO MODI

The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 5, ahead of the nation-wide protest call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) and made six specific demands apart from their demand to repeal the anti-farmer farm bills. They have warned of intensified struggles in the future if the government fails to fulfill the demands.

Given the background that the Government of India has stopped all discussions with the SKM after January 22, the SKM has given a nationwide call to gherao offices of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) as part of its FCI Bachao Divas. They said that it is in opposition to the central government's attempts to dismantle the public distribution system, food distribution and MSP procurement. AIKS, as a constituent of the SKM, has fully supported this call.

In an open letter to the PM, the AIKS said, "You are aware that lakhs of kisans have been camping at the various Delhi borders for nearly four and a half months since November 26, 2020, despite the bitter cold, torrential rains and now the scorching heat" The protesting farmers, being supported by millions of farmers all over the country have been demanding the repeal of the three farm laws, a law guaranteeing MSP and procurement at remunerative prices, and withdrawal of the Electricity and Pollution Bills. "Unfortunately, your government has not conceded even a single of these demands and has stopped all discussion with the SKM after January 22, 2021," the letter said.

The AIKS said that the attack of the central government on the FCI, MSP, procurement of food grains and the public distribution system began with the report of the Shanta Kumar Committee placed in January 2015. It recommended the following: 1. Reduce the number of beneficiaries under the Food Security Act – from the then 67 per cent to 40 per cent. 2. Allow private players to procure and store food grains. 3. Stop bonuses on minimum support price (MSP) paid by states to farmers, and adopt the cash transfer system so

that MSP and food subsidy amounts can be directly transferred to the accounts of farmers and food security beneficiaries. 4. FCI should involve itself in full-fledged grains procurement only in those states which are poor in procurement. In the case of those states which are performing well, like Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, the states should do the procurement.

"It is evident that the three farm laws enacted by your government would carry forward some of these recommendations. They compromise the FCI, MSP, PDS and procurement of food grains," the AIKS said to the PM.

The AIKS said that while the central government claims that the cost of handling food storage is huge, Rs 37/kg for rice and Rs 27/kg for wheat, for the last several years, it has not cleared all dues of this FCI expense and as a result the total debt on FCI today is Rs 3.81 lakh crores. "It (FCI) pays more than eight per cent interest on this. On the other hand, for the last several years, the budget of the FCI has been reduced. Recently, it also changed the rules for the procurement of crops which will increase problems of sale by sharecroppers. The FCI's procurement centres have also been reduced," the AIKS said.

Highlighting their concerns with the new farm laws, the AIKS said that under the Essential Commodities Amendment Act 2020, the central government has freed up stock limits by all private traders and corporates and permitted annual increase in food grain prices by 50 per cent. It said that this will increase food grain hoarding, profiteering and black marketing. The AIKS also stressed that the new Mandi Act will promote private mandis and will practically wind up government procurement and MSP rates.

"Food grains will be handled totally by the private sector. The Acts will increase control of the private sector in food grains storage, cold storage, food processing and marketing.

Ultimately the government plans to wind up subsidised food distribution under PDS and reduce it to a cash transfer scheme under pressure from the WTO and imperialist countries like the USA. It also plans to sell off the FCI warehouses to the private sector to pay off the debts," the AIKS wrote in the letter.

It reiterated that the central government is responsible for the food security of our country and for this it has to procure food grains, maintain food stocks to tide over scarcities and calamities and distribute and provide food grains to the poor to ensure that people are not forced to remain hungry.

"The budget allocation for food subsidy continues to remain stagnant at around Rs 1,15,000 crore for the last several years and even this amount is not fully spent by the government. There are today 81.35 crore PDS beneficiaries, granted 5 kg food grains per month and they will be forced to buy from the open market if PDS is wound up," it said.

The PDS supplies around 50 million tonnes of food grains to the poor. The Niti Aayog has already recommended that 60 per cent of the ration cards in urban areas and 40 per cent of the ration cards in rural areas must be reduced. "If the poor have to buy from the open market they will starve and deaths due to hunger will increase. It is only the private corporates, both domestic and foreign, that will benefit," the AIKS asserted.

The AIKS also alleged that the central government claims incorrectly that there is surplus food in India. "It (central government) states that it has more than double the required food stock of around 42 million tonnes. This is mainly because food has not been adequately supplied to the poor and the needy," they said. The AIKS reminded that India is shockingly rated at 94 out of 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index. "Its score of 27.2 shows a serious hunger situation in the country and over the last few years this has worsened. It shows that around 35 per cent of our population is undernourished," the AIKS said.

The AIKS stressed that it is a serious matter of the future of both food growers and food eaters, hence they raise the demands for strengthening

the FCI, guaranteeing procurement of all crops at MSP and expanding and making the PDS run efficiently.

The AIKS has come up with six specific demands relating to the FCI, MSP, PDS and procurement. They demanded that the FCI must be strengthened by increasing its budget substantially and utilising it completely. The FCI loan and interest must be fully paid off by the central government and the FCI's procurement centres must be greatly increased all over the country so that farmers can get some guarantee of MSP, they demanded.

The AIKS also sought that all purchases must be done on remunerative MSP and strict action must be taken against buyers who purchase below that MSP. The process of procurement must be completed in minimum time and it must be ensured that farmers do not face any problems due to lack of bags etc.

The source of food security for millions of people is the PDS service through the FCI. The AIKS demanded that the storage must be continued by the government and run smoothly so that people do not have to suffer from hunger. All attempts to cut down the number of ration cards must be immediately withdrawn, they demanded.

Expansion of PDS towards universalisation and ensuring that the 81.35 crore PDS beneficiaries get 15 kg food grains, and 1 kg each of dal, sugar and cooking oil per head per month until then, is another demand made by the AIKS.

It demanded a roll back of the provision of direct payment to farmers' bank accounts. "Implementing it in haste will lead to many complex problems that will prevent many farmers from getting the price of their crops. The decision to submit Jamabandhi for the procurement of wheat must be withdrawn," AIKS said.

And lastly, the AIKS demanded that the FCI employees and workers who are on contract must be given permanent charges and all vacant posts must be filled up immediately. In the letter to the PM, the AIKS urged him to concede the above demands at the earliest, failing which, it said, the united struggle will be further intensified. □

CITU-AIKS-AIAWU HOLD NATIONWIDE ONLINE PUBLIC MEETING ON BURNING ISSUES

In a new initiative, on the evening of May 8, 2021, the CITU, AIKS and AIAWU held a joint nationwide online public meeting on the burning current issues of the people of our country. The public meeting was widely propagated through posters in Hindi, English and other national languages. Tens of thousands of working people from around 25 states attended the meeting.

The speakers were the General Secretaries of the three class organisations – Tapan Sen, Hannan Mollah and B Venkat. And the presidium comprised the three Presidents – K Hemalata, Ashok Dhawale and A Vijayaraghavan.

All the speakers first paid homage to the tens of thousands of people who had died in the horrendous second wave of the Covid pandemic. Thousands of them had met their deaths due to lack of oxygen, ventilators, medicines and hospital beds. These were preventable deaths.

As of today, May 12, the total Covid cases in India have crossed 2.3 crore and Covid deaths have crossed 2.5 lakh. Both these figures are the second highest in the world, after the USA. But the daily caseload average for the last one week was nearly 4 lakh and the deaths per day have crossed 4 thousand, both these alarming figures being the highest in the world ever since the pandemic began. Even more alarming is the fact that these are gross underestimates, and various experts have opined that the real figures may be at least five times higher.

As of May 10, those who have received the first dose of the vaccine are only 9.9 per cent, and those who are fully vaccinated are just 2.6 per cent.

The speakers said that it is now widely known and accepted, both nationally and internationally, that the criminal culpability for this horrific state of affairs lies squarely with the bankruptcy, bravado, absence of planning and anti-scientific attitude of the BJP-RSS central government led by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. Leave alone dealing with this

macabre situation, it is interested only in speeding up the obscenely expensive Central Vista project.

On the other hand, this government has callously used the pandemic to attack the three basic classes who produce the wealth of the country – the working class, peasantry and agricultural workers. It has done this by bringing in the Farm Laws, Labour Codes and the Electricity Bill, and by its heartless treatment of migrant workers last year. It has embarked on a shameless privatisation and disinvestment drive of almost all major sectors. Hunger, unemployment and price rise is at an all time high. All this is being done to placate and greatly enhance the profits and the wealth of the domestic and foreign corporate lobby.

The speakers welcomed the defeat of the BJP in three of the state assembly elections and in the rural local body elections in Uttar Pradesh. They particularly hailed the victory of the LDF in Kerala, calling it a victory of pro-people policies and performance.

In the end, the speakers called for a sustained drive by all three organisations to help Covid-affected patients and their relatives in every possible way, and also for a nationwide campaign exposing the Modi regime, adhering to the Covid protocol, around the following demands:

1. Ramp up vaccine production; ensure free and universal vaccination within six months.
2. Scrap anti-people, discriminatory and pro-corporate Vaccine Policy.
3. Start rural mobile vaccination centres without the condition of online registration.
4. Ensure hospital beds, oxygen and other medical facilities to meet the Covid surge.
5. Strengthen public health infrastructure and recruit necessary health personnel.

6. Ensure non-Covid patients get effective treatment in government hospitals.
7. Scrap anti-people Farm Laws, anti-worker Labour Codes and Electricity Bill.
8. Guarantee MSP and procurement through central legislation.
9. Stop privatization and disinvestment in all sectors.
10. Cash transfer of Rs 7500 per month for all non income tax paying families.
11. 10 kg free food grains per person per month for the next six months.
12. 200 days of work for agricultural workers with Rs 600 daily wage under MNREGA.
13. Any order under Disaster Management Act imposing restrictions on movement, curfew etc must accompany strict order on all employers and all others banning retrenchment, wage-cut and eviction from residences etc and the same must be strictly enforced.
14. Ensure availability of protective gear, equipments etc for all health and frontline workers and those engaged in pandemic-management work including ASHAs and anganwadi employees along with comprehensive insurance coverage for them all.
15. Scrap the Central Vista project Make PM Cares Fund transparent and accountable.

FIRST FREEDOM STRUGGLE OBSERVED AT DELHI BORDERS

May 10 was the anniversary of the beginning of the First War of Indian Independence in 1857. It was on that day that Indian soldiers revolted against the British imperialist rulers at Meerut and began their march to Delhi. The SKM had earlier decided to organise a national convention that day. But it had to be postponed due to the deadly Covid surge.

However, large public meetings were held at all Delhi protest borders that day to

commemorate the heroic armed freedom struggle of 1857 and to pay homage to lakhs of its martyrs. After the completion of wheat harvesting, thousands of farmers have come back to all the borders from nearby states, and have thus greatly strengthened the struggle.

A SAD AND UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT

A sad and unfortunate incident came to light last week. It was the first such case in nearly six months of this historic farmers' struggle, in which tens of thousands of women have participated with admirable strength, tenacity and determination.

A 26 year old woman from West Bengal came to the Tikri border in April along with some persons posing as the 'Kisan Social Army'. She was assaulted by some of these persons on the way to Delhi and after reaching the Tikri border. A week later she developed high fever, was found Covid positive and was admitted to a private hospital in Bahadurgarh. Sadly, on April 30 she passed away due to Covid. On May 8, her father lodged a formal complaint with the Bahadurgarh police station. On May 10, the Haryana police registered an FIR against six people, including Anil Malik and Anup Singh, for the alleged gang rape on her.

On May 9, the SKM immediately came out with a public statement on this condemnable incident. It said, "When this came to the notice of the SKM, we decided to take strictest possible action. Four days ago, the Tikri committee of SKM had already removed the tents and banners of the so-called 'Kisan Social Army'. The accused were barred from participating in the movement and a public appeal was issued for their social boycott..From day one the SKM has assured the family of the deceased colleague that it will extend them every possible support in any legal recourse that they prefer...The SKM will extend full cooperation to the police in bringing out the truth of this matter. No one shall be spared..The SKM shall follow Zero Tolerance for any incident of sexual harassment, assault or violence against women."

A joint statement by several women's organisations, including AIDWA, condemned this incident and demanded stringent action against the culprits.

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AIKS CONDEMNS MODI GOVERNMENT'S ATTACK ON FARMERS ROLL BACK INSENSITIVE HIKE IN FERTILISER PRICES

The Narendra Modi led BJP Government has just before Kharif season allowed a free hand to fertiliser companies to hike prices of key fertilisers. The hike in prices of Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is as high as 58 per cent from Rs.1200/- per bag of 50 Kilograms to Rs.1900/-. According to reports the prices of Nitrogen Phosphorous Potassium (NPK) have risen by 52 per cent or an increase of Rs.615/- per bag from around 1175/- per bag to Rs.1790/- per bag. Prices of Potash have risen by Rs.850/- per bag almost doubling from around Rs.875/- per bag in May, 2020 to Rs.1725/- per bag and that of Ammonium Phosphate Sulphate (APS) have risen by Rs.425/- per bag, i.e., from about Rs.925/- per bag to about Rs.1,350/- per bag or about 46 percent increase (Calculated from <https://www.ifco.in/index.php/ourproducts/index/price-details> and <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1624086>). The increasing prices of diesel have already led to an exorbitant increase in irrigation costs and costs of tilling using tractors and tillers. The BJP Government has also stubbornly refused to accept farmers' demand of fixing MSP at least 50 per cent more than Cost of Production (C2+50%) despite increasing input costs making agriculture unviable. This increase in fertiliser prices is a direct attack on the farmers in India and AIKS demands that it must be immediately rolled back.

The fraud played on the farmers by the BJP Government and Narendra Modi who are

advertising in a big way that Rs.2000/- has been transferred to the banks of 8.69 crore farmers under PM-KISAN has to be exposed. In fact even if one considers only DAP and that in a hectare a farmer uses 4 bags the increase in input cost is Rs.2,800/- per hectare. When increase in costs of other inputs including diesel are added one can imagine the exorbitant rise in cost of production. This increase comes at a time when peak buying of fertilisers take place for the Kharif sowing. Farmers use DAP as a primary fertiliser during sowing of different Kharif crops like paddy, cotton, groundnut etc. This exorbitant rise in prices will adversely affect the finances of the farmers, especially tenant farmers, poor and middle farmers who may have to rely on private money lenders. The BJP Government is making much show of giving Rs.2000/- under PM_KISAN. Actually while it is indulging in a farce of giving with one hand, it is taking much more with the other hand from farmers to fill the coffers of corporate fertiliser companies.

The All India Kisan Sabha calls for the protection of the interests of the peasantry by controlling the prices of fertilisers. Price control can alone help to keep a check on the arbitrary decisions of fertiliser companies who are indulging in profiteering in times of a pandemic and when farmers are already reeling under a crisis. AIKS calls upon all units to rise in protest by rallying all like-minded organisations. □



AIKS ON MSP OF KHARIF CROPS 2021-22

NARENDRA MODI LED BJP GOVERNMENT BETRAYS PROMISES TO FARMERS

MSP ANNOUNCED NOT REMUNERATIVE; DOES NOT REFLECT INCREASED COSTS

AIKS condemns the Narendra Modi led BJP Government's betrayal of farmers by announcing Minimum Support Prices (MSP) of Kharif crops for 2021-22 that are neither remunerative nor commensurate to increased costs of cultivation. It is a mechanical addition of a small amount over the last year's MSP without even accounting for the inflation or rise in costs of cultivation due to the BJP Government's policies. It has not used the formula of comprehensive cost (C2) plus a profit margin of at least 50 percent above that for computing MSP. It has continued with the farcical claim of fixing MSP above the paid out costs plus imputed value of Family Labour (A2+FL). This is far below the C2+50 and does not meet the aspirations of the farmers who already are in an acute crisis due to the pandemic and uncontrolled rise in input costs.

It is necessary to debunk the lies of the BJP Government that the MSP announced are remunerative. Let alone being remunerative even these meagre prices are not realisable for a majority of the farmers as there is no assured procurement. Firstly, the huge difference between C2 and A2+FL even while taking the CACP calculation at face value is to be noted. Secondly, the huge difference in price projection by CACP and by State Agricultural Departments also is glaring.

The table shows how even a farmer who is able to sell the crop at MSP is going to incur a huge loss. However, we have a situation wherein even this meagre MSP is not guaranteed as there is no assured procurement for all the crops. This is precisely the reason why farmers are demanding

correct computation of costs, fixing of MSP as per the C2+50% formula and enacting a law to provide a legal guarantee of the MSP.

The CACP's estimation of cost of cultivation are much lower than the corresponding estimates made by State governments. For example, in case of paddy, CACP's estimate for Andhra Pradesh (1559/Qtl) is Rs. 555/Qtl lower than the estimate of the State government (Rs.2114/Qtl) ; for Punjab, CACP's estimate (1271/Qtl) is Rs.723/Qtl lower than the State government estimate (Rs.1995/Qtl) ; for Kerala, CACP's estimate (Rs. 2044/Qtl) is Rs. 808/Qtl lower than the State government estimate (Rs.2852/Qtl); and for Karnataka, the CACP's estimate (Rs.1635/Qtl) is Rs. 1098/Qtl lower than the State government estimate (Rs.2733/Qtl). For Arhar(Tur), in Karnataka the State C2 projection is Rs.6399/Qtl while CACP claims it is only Rs.4961/Qtl i.e. Rs.1438/Qtl lesser. In the same State, for Moong, State government estimates the cost to be Rs.9456/Qtl while CACP estimates it to be 34 per cent less at only Rs.6173/Qtl. Clearly, there is a huge discrepancy in cost calculations and the arbitrary manner in which costs are calculated by CACP is also exposed.

AIKS demands that the Narendra Modi led BJP Government stop cheating the farmers by indulging in this fraudulent exercise and enact a law to assure remunerative prices by rectifying problems in cost calculations. AIKS calls upon all its units to rise in protest and expose the betrayal by the BJP Government

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KISAN MAZDOOR MARCHES REFLECT STEELY RESOLVE



The AIKS, CITU and AIAWU jointly organised three Shaheed Yaadgar Kisan Mazdoor Padayatras (Martyrs' Memorial March of Farmers and Workers) remembering the martyrs of the freedom struggle and the nearly 300 martyrs of the on-going historic kisan struggle. The padayatras took around a clear message of resistance against the anti-farmer, anti-worker acts brought by the Narendra Modi led BJP government. Aimed at strengthening the historic struggle of the peasantry and taking a campaign against the pro-corporate, anti-people policies of the government, it sent a strong message that the united struggle will go on until victory.

The first of the three marches or padayatras set off on March 18, 2021 from the legendary Lal Sadak in Hansi of Hisar district of Haryana to the Tikri border 120 kilometres away. Lal Sadak got its name as the blood of thousands of martyrs who were killed by the British

imperialist regime after the first war of independence in 1857 is said to have turned the entire street red. The padayatras was flagged off from Hansi by Gurjit Kaur, the niece of Bhagat Singh. The massive gathering of farmers, workers, agricultural workers, youth and women was addressed by Gurjit Kaur, AIKS president Ashok Dhawale, AIAWU joint secretary Vikram Singh, Haryana Kisan Sabha vice president Inderjit Singh, CITU Haryana state secretary Jai Bhagwan and others. Addressing the gathering, Gurjit Kaur emphasised on the need for all to unite against the anti-farmer, anti-worker acts and called upon them to take forward the struggle of Bhagat Singh and other martyrs. Leaders of different kisan organisations and trade unions were also present. The speakers paid homage to the martyrs of the freedom struggle and to nearly 300 martyrs of the on-going historic kisan struggle. AIKS joint secretary Vijoo Krishnan,

Punjab state secretary Major Singh Punnewal, Haryana state secretary Sumit, Bihar state joint secretary P N Rao and other leaders from Haryana were present. Before starting the padayatra, leaders paid homage to the martyrs memorial commemorating the martyrs of Hansi.

A sub yatra began from Jind district which was flagged off by CITU secretary A R Sindhu who also addressed the mass meeting on the occasion. AIKS finance secretary P Krishnaprasad, CITU Haryana vice president Surendra Singh, AIKS Haryana state president Phool Singh Sheokand, AIDWA Haryana state secretary Savita and others also addressed. This joined the main Hansi padayatra at Rohtak. Winding its way touching different villages and having several meetings, the padayatra marched amidst slogans as well as enthusiastic reception from villagers. People of all ages, farmers, workers, youth and small traders came out in big numbers to welcome the padayatra. Many joined the padayatra for long stretches. Gurudwaras and different villages came out to provide for food and refreshments to the marchers. There were also people in their seventies who traversed the entire distance from Hansi to Tikri. After walking for miles many had blistered feet but that did not dampen their enthusiasm.

On March 19, two more AIKS-CITU-AIAWU padayatras set off to Singhu and Palwal Border. One of them began from Shaheed Bhagat Singh's village Khatkar Kalan in Nawanshahar district as a vehicle jatha up to Panipat in Haryana. At Khatkar Kalan homage was paid to Shaheed Bhagat Singh and other martyrs. CITU president K Hemalata addressed the gathering and flagged off the vehicle jatha. AIKS joint secretary Vijoo Krishnan, AIAWU joint secretary Vikram Singh and AIKS Punjab vice president Sukhwinder Singh Sekhon, CITU state secretary Chandrashekhar and others were present. Flagging off the jatha, K Hemalata emphasised that the unity of workers and peasants will ensure that the BJP government's moves to promote corporate interests at the expense of the people are given a fitting rebuff. The vehicles halted at Shambhu Border where nearby villagers

had organised a reception. After halting at Kurukshetra and Karnal where people of all walks of life came out to enthusiastically welcome the jatha they reached Panipat by night. Leaders of AIKS, CITU, AIAWU and other mass organisations, different kisan organisations like BKU also addressed the meetings. At Panipat, all participants of the padayatra who converged from Punjab and nearby districts of Haryana stayed in the Kisan Bhawan under the management of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Tikait). The idea behind the building was to provide a place of stay to farmers visiting the city and on the request of AIKS the facilities were made available. On March 20, 2021 the padayatra from Panipat started off with enthusiastic response from people. It was flagged off by Bhagat Singh's niece Gurjit Kaur in the presence of A R Sindhu, P Krishnaprasad, Jai Bhagwan, Major Singh Punnewal, Dharam Pal Seel and others. The padayatra covered nearly 65 kilometres and reached Singhu Border on March 23.

Despite efforts of the BJP government and local BJP leadership to disrupt the padayatra, people came out in large numbers in support. One of the meetings had to be cancelled as the local organiser who wanted to welcome the padayatra was pressurised not to hold a reception. However, the march got a rapturous welcome even in that region. The marchers were first welcomed in Ratangarh near Chaduni Jatta in Kurukshetra, where the local villagers had arranged lunch for the farmers. Similar receptions followed in the villages of Patti Kaliyana (Samalkha) and Ganaur where the hosts showered flower petals and greeted them with sweets and water. Women were present in large numbers and accompanied the marchers till the next point. A leading Gurudwara in Samalkha arranged for accommodation and dinner. The number of marchers swelled each day with about 400 marching consistently while others joined in for short distances.

The third padayatra of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh started from Mathura on March 19 and marched about 90 kilometres to reach Palwal Border on March 23. It was inaugurated by AIKS general secretary Hannan Mollah and

the public meeting was addressed by P Krishnaprasad, AIKS UP state secretary Mukut Singh, MP state secretary Ramnarayan Kurariya, Mathura leader Digambar Singh and others. Speaking on the occasion, Hannan Mollah pointed out that the historic kisan struggle and the unprecedented unity had put up a resolute resistance and generated hope among people that the BJP government's moves can be defeated. The padayatra was welcomed in different villages Sarai, Mitrol, Srinagar etc where villagers came out to receive the marchers. At the Palwal sugar mills, padayatra was welcomed by cooperative sugar mill workers, farmers from the region and the director of the sugar mill. CITU workers, mid-day meal workers and workers from Sarva Karamchari Sangh and others joined in procession to Palwal. AIKS joint secretary N K Shukla, AIKS joint secretary Badal Saroj, P Krishnaprasad, Vikram Singh, Bharat Singh Uttar Pradesh Kisan Sabha president, Mukut Singh,

secretary, UP Kisan Sabha, Digambar Singh, Madhya Pradesh Kisan sabha secretary Ramnarayan Kuraria, Babu Ram, Virendra Malik, and others were an active part of the padayatra and also addressed meetings.

As the marches reached Tikri, Singhu and Palwal borders they were welcomed with slogans. AIAWU general secretary B Venkat, Vikram Singh, AIDWA general secretary Mariam Dhawale, JMS Delhi secretary Asha Sharma, A R Sindhu, Badal Saroj, P Krishnaprasad and other leaders were present to receive the marchers. Participants overcame great obstacles to be part of the padaytras. Many suffered blisters on their feet and the scorching sun also created difficulties but the zeal or spirits were not dampened. The spirit shows the steely resolve of the workers and peasants to not move an inch back until the anti-farmer, anti-worker acts are repealed. It reaffirms the confidence that the struggle will emerge victorious. □



FARMERS' STRUGGLE SCORES MAJOR VICTORY IN TOHANA



After the big victory registered by the huge meeting of over 10,000 farmers at Hisar on May 24 over the BJP-JJP state government and its police (reported earlier in these columns), the farmers of Haryana scored another major victory at Tohana on June 7, after 3,000-5,000 farmers laid a massive siege to the police station for three days and nights.

The Haryana state government has been playing a nefarious game to put farmers and police against each other in order to disrupt the movement. Towards this end, the police are being misused to strike terror amongst the local youth by arresting them on trumped-up criminal charges. Farmers began their protest against the anti-farmer abuses made on June 1 by JJP MLA Devender Singh Babli. The police arrested three youth activists Vikas Sisar, Ravi Azad and Makkhan Singh on totally false charges.

Thousands of farmers stormed and laid constant siege to the Tohana police station, with the demand that the three youth be released and the false criminal cases against them withdrawn. If this was not done, the farmers insisted that all of them should also be arrested. Langars were

started at the protest site and police personnel were also invited to have food.

The protest was led on behalf of the SKM by Rakesh Tikait, Gurnam Singh Charuni, Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Yogendra Yadav, Yudhvir Singh, P Krishna Prasad, Inderjit Singh and others. Among others of the AIKS and AIAWU who stayed with the protesters and addressed them were Phool Singh Sheokand, Sumit, Ram Chander Sahnal, Vishnu Dutt, Master Balbir Singh, Shakuntala Jakhar, Miya Singh and others, while Jagtar Singh was in the panel to conduct the proceedings. The AIKS also mobilised well along with others, with red flags seen everywhere.

Eventually, Babli was forced to tender an apology for his abusive statements. And at the end of the three day siege, the police were forced to release all the three youth and to withdraw the false cases against them. The Tohana victory came on the heels of the Hisar victory, in which false cases were withdrawn against over 350 farmers. Both these victories enthused the farmers not only in Haryana, but all over the country. □



Massive siege at the police station in Tohana (Haryana)



Farmers March at Hisar (Haryana)

HARYANA FARMERS FORCE THE REPRESSIVE BJP GOVT TO WITHDRAW POLICE CASES AGAINST 350 FARMERS AFTER 10,000-STRONG SHOW OF STRENGTH IN HISAR



On May 24, the farmers of Haryana won a significant victory against the repressive BJP-JJP government in the state. On that day Hisar saw a massive show of strength by over 10,000 farmers led by the SKM at Krantiman Park.

The government had mobilised over 3,000 police and Rapid Action Force personnel to suppress the protest. But thousands of farmers came in tractors, trollies, cars and other vehicles. The police could do nothing against such a huge mobilisation.

The farmers were denouncing the brutal police repression in the form of lathi charge and tear gas shells by the BJP-JJP state government in Hisar on May 16, which led to hundreds of farmers being seriously injured. To add insult to injury, the administration went back on its word and slapped criminal police cases under Section 307 (attempt to murder) and other IPC sections against over 350 farmers. On that day thousands of farmers were demonstrating peacefully at a programme in Hisar that was attended by CM Khattar.

On May 24, the farmers had decided to gherao the Divisional Commissioner's office. But before the gherao began, the SKM delegation was invited

for talks. After a marathon bilateral discussion between the administration led by the Divisional Commissioner of Hisar and SKM leaders, it was agreed that all police cases registered regarding the May 16 events and those prior to it will be withdrawn, compensation will be given to the vehicles of farmers that were damaged by the police, and a kin of the farmer Ramachandra who died in the May 24 demonstration due to heart attack will be given a job. On behalf of the district administration the Commissioner also expressed regrets for the unfortunate happenings on May 16.

Prominent SKM leaders who addressed the farmers and took part in the meeting with the administration included Balbir Singh Rajewal, Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Gurnam Singh Charuni, Rakesh Tikait, Jagjit Singh Dallewal, Dr Ashok Dhawale, Yudhvir Singh, Kanwaljit Sandhu, Abhimanyu Kohar, Inderjit Singh, Surendra Singh, Ranjit Raju, P Krishna Prasad, Major Singh Punnawal, Som Vir Sangwan, Phool Singh Sheokand, Sumit and others.

The massive gathering also came down heavily on the anti-people and pro-corporate Modi regime and resolved to intensify the ongoing farmers agitation across the country on May 26. □

AP: MASSIVE RALLY AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF VIZAG STEEL PLANT

-B Tulasidas

The national leaders of Samyukta Kisan Morcha and trade union leaders of Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Committee addressed a huge rally called 'Rytu Karmika Sankharava Sabha' (farmer worker clarion call meeting) against privatisation of Vizag Steel on April 18th on the beach of Visakhapatnam. Thousands of farmers, workers, employees and their family members attended the meeting. All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) president, Ashok Dhawale, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson, Rakesh Tikait announced that they will raise the issue of continuation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) in the public sector at all their meetings with the centre along with the farmers' issues. The leaders said that the centre had failed to give captive mines to the VSP, which was resulting in high production costs. The investment of the centre in the VSP was only Rs 5,000 crore but it had contributed several times of that amount to

the centre and state in the form of duties and taxes. They demanded that the centre explain why it had written off Rs 6 lakh crore owed by private companies. The national emblem of India, the Lion Pillar of Ashoka, signifies the message 'Satyameva Jayate' (truth alone triumphs), which is known to every citizen in the country. However, prime minister, Narendra Modi is uttering falsehoods day in and day out, national leaders of farmers and workers' unions alleged.

Ashok Dhawale said they are extending full support to the agitation by the Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Porata committee to save VSP from privatisation. He Commended all parties in the state, except the BJP, for their united stand against the proposal to privatise the steel plant. The agitation for VSP was gaining support all over the country, he said. Dhawale underlined



the need to protect the livelihoods of VSP workers and the farmers, who had given their lands for the establishment of the plant. He alleged that other public sector units (PSUs) in the country would also meet the same fate if VSP was allowed to be privatised. In the last seven years, the union government was busy privatising telecom, education, medical and health, ports and airports. These 'anti-people and pro-corporate' policies have helped 140 top corporate groups to make a profit of \$ 596 billion, despite the pandemic situation. The policies of the union government were being opposed by the people of all states in the country, Dhawale said.

BKU(Bhartiya Kisan Union) leader, Rakesh Tikait said that lakhs of farmers, who were waging struggles in the national capital seeking legalisation of minimum support price (MSP), were all supporting the movement against the privatisation of PSUs. Describing the VSP as the 'property of the local people' as it was established on the land given by the local farmers, he said that the people of India have understood that the union government was only interested in the welfare of a few corporate

groups. AIKS leader, Balkaran Singh, from Punjab, alleged that the target of the union government was to privatise land, air and water. He drew a parallel between the East India Company, which had plundered the wealth of the nation in the name of trade, and the centre, which was out to hand over public assets to corporate groups.

AIAWU general secretary, B Venkat appealed to the chief minister, Y S Jagan and the opposition leader, Chandrababu Naidu to oppose the anti-people policies of the Narendra Modi government which has been ditching the interests of Telugu people. All India Kisan Sangarsh State Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) state convener, Vadde Sobhanadreeswara Rao lamented the Modi governments' pro-corporate policies. Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Porata committee leader, Ch Narasinga Rao appealed to the gathering to speed up the campaign of 'one crore signatures' and that should be an eye-opener to the central government. Porata committee leaders, J Ayodhya Ram, D Adinarayana, Mantri Rajasekhar and others spoke on this occasion.

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FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK STRUGGLE AGAINST ADANI PORTS IN TAMIL NADU

-B. Thulasi Narayana

The historic farmers' movement at the Delhi borders had its cascading effect even in Tamil Nadu. Here also the national wealth is being swindled by the top corporate houses in order to accumulate their wealth, but in the name of Nation Building under the hypocritical Atmanirbharta slogan. This is being taken forward with the Ambani and Adani crony corporate groups desperately taking over the state owned Ports, Airports, Railways, Agriculture, Minerals, Forests, National Highways and other important Public Sector Undertakings, which are the backbone of the Indian Economy.

The Adani Group had asked the Modi-led BJP Government for the entire stretch of 7000 Km of the sea coast (Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal) to be handed over to it under its control to develop the Sagarmala Project of ports at every 200 Km on this stretch of coast line.



The Narendra Modi Government immediately gave its consent to the proposals without looking into the viability/feasibility of such large scale projects. The proposals were neither discussed holistically inside Parliament nor outside Parliament. The projects which are proposed to be carried out on these shores would not only destroy national wealth but also destroy the livelihood of fishermen on the entire stretch of 10 states. The small and marginal farmers on the coastal stretch would be affected severely due to ecological and environmental disasters. This attitude of the Central Government does not augur well for federalism, since it violates the basic structure of Centre State relations as mandated by the Constitution.

PROPOSED ADANI PORT AT CHENNAI

The recent acquisition by Adani Group of major stakes of various ports along the long coastal stretch has raised many eyebrows among the economists and industrialists in the country. The classic example was the sudden acquisition of major stakes by the Adani group in the L&T Port in order to expand it as Asia's biggest port at Kattupalli, which is just 30 Km from Chennai Port Trust and 15 Km from Kamaraj Port, both of which are Public Sector Undertakings.

The proposed project will have vast infrastructure, which handles multiple types of cargo with deep draft berths and multipurpose terminals and the port is going to handle large bulk carriers. It is being said that the port would give stiff competition to other such big ports across the world.

The L&T Port which was acquired by the Adani Group for expansion was established on 330 acres and now the Adani Group has sought an additional 4000 acres of land on the coast and 2000 acres in Bay of Bengal, hence the upcoming project would be 8 Km X 6 Km in size with an investment of Rs 53,031 crore. The upcoming project in the

name of Adani Kattupalli Ports (SEZ), had called for a public hearing on the Environmental Impact Assessment done by it. The EIA report was published only in English but deliberately not in the local mother tongue Tamil, which is mandatory as per the public hearing guidelines.

The AIKS and CITU along with other frontal organizations made a representation to the Collector on the violation pertaining to the project expansion and the EIA in Tamil. Both AIKS and CITU took up the campaign on the violations made by the Adani group while preparing the EIA. AIKS and CITU had called for postponement of the public hearing until the report is published in Tamil to enable the victims to study the impact of the project. The district administration was adamant and rejected the demand on the postponement of the public hearing. CITU and AIKS took a massive campaign among the victims.

The recent Tamil Nadu assembly elections triggered an interesting debate on the proposed project and the degradation of the environment and ecology, along with livelihood issues came to the forefront. The victims had rallied behind AIKS and CITU leadership in order to oppose the project. The people of the area did not allow the two term MLA Balaraman of AIADMK to campaign in their area, since the MLA had a soft corner for the project proposal.

The State Government realised the anger and outrage among the fishing community and other people of the area and the district administration hurriedly postponed the public hearing indefinitely, citing Covid-19 guidelines. The people in the area were relieved and heaved a sigh of relief and appreciated the efforts of AIKS and CITU for taking up their cause with a sustained campaign. AIKS and CITU organized a public meeting which was well attended and was addressed by two term Rajya Sabha member from CPI(M) T K Rangarajan. While speaking at the meeting he assured the fishermen that the issue would be taken up for scrutiny by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the feasibility of the project pertaining to Environment, Ecology, Bio-Diversity and Coastal Regulatory Zone violations.

B Thulasi Narayana, Secretary AIKS state unit, ridiculed the claim of the Adani Management on the hollow promises that adequate employment

opportunities would be given to the local youth, because the earlier Management of L&T Port had also made similar promises.

The AIKS and CITU are determined that the most important issues are yet to be answered by the statutory authorities. It is almost certain that the authorities would find it very difficult to answer the apprehensions, because the entire project was hurriedly done without taking into account the interests of the stakeholders of the area. The key questions before the government that are unanswered are as follows.

This ecosystem stretch consists of invaluable mangroves, estuaries, brackish water lakes and Kattupalli Island. It also separates Pulicat Lake, the second largest brackish water lake in India, from the Bay of Bengal.

The Kattupalli dunes protect the hinterland from violent storms and salinity intrusion. The Ennore-Pulicat backwaters absorb rainwater and tidal storm surges. Araniyar and Kosasthalayar rivers join the sea in this region and the expansion of this port will destroy and divert the flood flow. Destroying these wetlands would land people at a greatly heightened risk of disastrous flooding.

The project threatens the livelihood and security of more than 30,000 fisherfolk who depend on the backwaters and the sea. Already the coastal ecosystem is extremely fragile contributing to the destruction of fisherfolk livelihoods. The proposed port construction will further destroy even the existing livelihood of over 40,000 people. 11 villages are likely to be submerged and these villages will be very badly affected due to erosion and coastal flooding.

The total length of the berth proposed as a part of the revised master plan will be 9229 m, in addition to 1250 m long barge berths. Erosion triggered by the port's breakwaters will breach the narrow barrier separating Pulicat Lake from the sea, and merge the lake with the Bay of Bengal.

There are many questions to be answered by the Government of India pertaining to why the GOI allowed a private entity to build the biggest port with such huge investment of Rs 53,000 crore, when the two big public sector ports (Chennai Port



Trust and Kamaraj Port Terminal) at Chennai are not able to optimize their full capacity utilization due to the pandemic and the global recession since 2016.

It is far more important to convert these struggles into vibrant movements in the near future in order to expand the struggles and consolidate the Left movement for the overall benefit of vulnerable sections and downtrodden people who were deprived of their fundamental rights under neo-liberal policies under the false notion of development.

PROPOSED ADANI PORT AT KANYAKUMARI

The AIKS leadership came to know that the Central Government gave its consent to the same Adani Group for setting up another big port at Kizhmanakudi of Kanyakumari District on 12 square Km. The aggrieved fishermen and farmers in thousands, after all their grievances were ignored by the district administration, were mobilized in thousands and organized a mammoth public meeting on March 27, 2021 at the proposed port project site.

More than 15,000 people participated in the protest rally, which was presided over by M G Devasahayam, IAS Retired (Former Chief Secretary of Haryana Government), and it was addressed by AIKS National President Dr Ashok Dhawale, Rajwant Singh, Kanwal Preet Singh, Thomas Franco, AIKS TN State Secretary B Thulasi Narayana, and AIKS District Secretary of Kanyakumari P. Ravi Ayakode.

Many leaders and veterans of social movements questioned the rationale behind the proposed

project. Balaprajapathi Adigalar, National Fishermen Employees Federation General Secretary Olencio Simon and environmentalists, economists, social and political activists addressed the meeting. The leaders assured the gathering that the project would be resisted at all costs.

All the leaders vehemently opposed the project for shattering the livelihood of the vulnerable people. They warned the Central Government that the people are tired of concocted lies and disgusted with continuous attacks on the vulnerable people. Hence the people are not ready to believe anymore the concocted lies and the fake assurances on employment generation and development.

Dr Ashok Dhawale attacked the Modi Government on the neo-liberal policies and warned that the people's movement would be strengthened against these two projects, just as the farmers' struggles on the disastrous Farm Bills are being carried out successfully at Delhi and other North Indian states. He warned the AIADMK State Government not to test people's patience. The people would not hesitate to hold their next protest from the sea if these projects are not abolished immediately.

The other leaders of SKM also explained how the historic struggle against corporate dominance has begun from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and how it culminated at Delhi, gaining momentum with each passing day. Now the same kind of struggle against corporate loot has also begun in Tamil Nadu. And it needs to be taken forward vibrantly. They conveyed their full support and solidarity to the two ongoing movements at Chennai and Kanyakumari.

□

KARNATAKA: WITHDRAW ANTI-FARMER, ANTI-WORKER LAWS

- Vasanth K

“A second freedom struggle is being waged in the country. It is being waged against a government that is making laws to handover lands owned by peasants and the whole of agriculture to Indian and multinational corporates. It is being waged in Karnataka too. Unless and until the central and state governments withdraw the black laws it will continue to be waged’ said U Basavaraj, general secretary of the KPRS (affiliated to AIKS). He was addressing a huge rally at Freedom Park in Bangalore in connection with the ‘Vidhan Soudha Chalo’ organised by Samyukta Horata Karnataka on March 22, 2021, to demand withdrawal of anti-farmer, anti-worker laws. Samyukta Horata Karnataka is a coalition of practically all peasant and agriculture workers organisations, trade unions, and dalit organisations in the state. The Samyukta Horata Karnataka had also earlier organised Peoples Republic Day Parade on January 26 this year.

This process of the entry of corporates into agriculture began in 1994 when India signed the GATT agreement on agriculture. The agreement had to be implemented by successive governments with a series of measures. The three black laws – one of the measures in this series – hands over all aspects of agriculture to corporates and undermines/destroys peasant agriculture. So, the second freedom struggle is against the rule of corporates being imposed, Basavaraj continued. It may be remembered the first freedom struggle was waged by peasants against laws enacted by British East India Company in 1793 that took away their land ownership and handed it over fully to zamindars and jagirdars. It was enacted in Bengal and later extended to British India. Peasants with their own experiences and through a series of struggles understood that unless British rule was ended “land to tiller” could never be achieved. So they participated in the first freedom struggle and succeeded in ending British rule, said Basavaraj, concluding with a confidence that they will succeed in the second freedom struggle also.

Earlier a huge procession of peasants and workers started from Bangalore City Railway

Station and culminated in a huge rally at Freedom Park. It is estimated that over 10,000 peasants and workers participated in the programme. Dr Darshan Pal, Yudhvir Singh and Rakesh Singh Tikait – central leaders of Samyukta Kisan Morcha, participated in the Rally. Tikait while addressing the rally gave a call to farmers to sell their crops at Vidhan Soudha. “If the police prevent you, tell them that PM Modi has declared that farmers will get the prescribed MSP anywhere outside APMC also. If they arrest you and take you to police station, continue selling your crops there too. So also if they put you in Jail. In Uttar Pradesh, farmers have started the agitation of selling paddy and sugarcane at DC offices,” he said. He also gave a call to farmers in Karnataka to lay siege to Bangalore, as farmers in North India had done at New Delhi. Yudhvir Singh referred to ‘new drama’ of the BJP of donating one handfull of rice, apparently in a bid to link rice to religion and religion to vote. ‘We need to tell BJP that why one handfull, we will give more rice, provided you formulate law to ensure MSP,” he said.

S Varalaxmi, state president of CITU was part of the presidium that conducted the proceedings of the rally. Nityananda Swamy, president of AIAWU Karnataka unit, Kodihalli Chandrashekar, KRRS & Hasiru Sene leader, Chukki Nanjundaswamy, another peasant leader, Diwalkar (RKS) and actor Chetan were among those present on the dais and spoke. A book on the anti-famer, anti-worker laws published by KPRS was released at the rally. Agriculture minister B C Patil on behalf of the state government, came to the rally venue to meet the leaders. A charter of demands was read to him and a memorandum was given to him.

The three central leaders of Samyukta Kisan Morcha – Dr Darshan Pal, Yudhvir Singh and Rakesh Singh Tikait, also participated in the kisan mahapanchayats at Shivamogga (in western Karnataka) and Haveri (northern Karnataka), earlier to Vidhan Soudha Chalo at Bangalore. Thousands of farmers participated in the two kisan mahapanchayats. □

RAJASTHAN: FARMERS JOINTLY OBSERVE ROZA-IFTAR AND NAVAMI

- Sanjay Madhav

The unity of farmers was seen in an unprecedented manner. Both Muslim and Hindu festivals were observed by the farmers. The eighth day of Roza Iftar on Shahjahanpur-Kheda border continued on April 21. The farmers jointly performed Rosa-Iftar and also celebrated Navratra and Navami.

It has been decided on the Shahjahanpur-Kheda border that the movement will continue, taking all kinds of vigilance, and in the coming days, a call has been made to the farmers to reach in maximum numbers. Discussions were organised in groups among farmers, following the Corona protocol as well. In these group discussions, it was decided to expedite it by reviewing the ongoing efforts to strengthen the defence against Corona.

According to the announcement of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha to give the possible answer of "Operation Shakti" to "Operation Clean" of the BJP-RSS government at the centre, the farmers have decided to gather more people and preparations are underway to gather farmers in large numbers at the border.

The farmers also discussed in detail in different groups on the conspiracies to eliminate the peasant movement and the strategy of combating them. Along with the slogan of "Fir Delhi Chalo", the peasants should return to the front site in maximum number, this was the emphasis of the meeting.

The meetings of the committees in all the districts and tehsils have started. The number of farmers at the morcha-site will increase in a planned manner. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha has again clarified that no one will be allowed to weaken the movement under the guise of an epidemic under any circumstances. On the morcha-site, the farmers will continue to work with the self-discipline to take care of themselves and their colleagues and to continue the movement. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha on April 21, demanded the government to vaccinate all the interested farmers at the morcha-site.

The Roza Iftar round on the Shahjahanpur-Kheda border continued for the eighth day. All the peasants performed Rosa-Iftar together, while Navratri and Navami were also celebrated by the farmers. On April 21, Rosa-Iftar and Navami was observed by Rajasthan Jat Mahasabha. In these two important events, Maulana Dilshad, Amjad Bhai, Fajru Bhai, Sajid Bhai, Abdul Bhai, Amaram, Ramkishan Mahlawat, Rajaram Meal, Himmat Singh Gujar, Balveer Chillar, Pemaram, Chhagan Chaudhary, Tara Singh Sidhu, Harfool Singh, Kalu Thori, Shopatram, Bhagirath Netad, Prahlad Mandota, Kala Singh, Giani Rajveer Singh, Jogendra Yadav, Pawan Duggal, Baba Jaimal Singh, Baba Sukhdev Singh, Prithvi Singh, Japan Singh, Nisha Sidhu and Vishwajit Singh participated.

□



Shaheed Yaadgar Kisan Mazdoor Padayatra starting from Hansi (Hisar)



Shaheed Yaadgar Kisan Mazdoor Padayatra starting from Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh's village Khatkar Kalan (Punjab)



Shaheed Yaadgar Kisan Mazdoor Padayatra starting from Mathura



The corpses spoke in one voice : "All is well, sab kuchh changa-changa"

Lord, in your ideal realm the hearse is now the Ganga

Lord, your crematoriums are too few; fewer the wood for pyres

Lord, our pall-bearers are too few, fewer yet the mourners

Lord, in every home Yama performs the dance macabre

Lord, in your ideal realm the hearse is now the Ganga

Lord, your smoke belching chimneys now seek respite

Lord, our bangles are shattered, shattered are our hearts

The fiddle plays while the towns are ablaze, "Wah, Billa-Ranga"

Lord, in your ideal realm the hearse is now the Ganga

Lord, your clothes are divine, divine is your radiance

Lord, the town entire sees you in your true form

If there be a real man here, come forward and say

"The emperor has no clothes"

Lord, in your ideal realm the hearse is now the Ganga.

-Parul Khakkar's poem translated into English by Rita and Abhijit Kothari

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