

PEASANTS' STRUGGLE

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AIKS General Secretary Hannan Mollah, AIKS Haryana Vice President Inderjit Singh and Com. Jogendra Sharma at Tikri Border Kisan Tractor Parade



AIKS President Ashok Dhawale, AIKS Joint Secretary K.K. Ragesh and Vijoo Krishnan, AIAWU Joint Secretary Vikram Singh, SFI President V.P. Sanu and General Secretary Mayukh Biswas at Shahjahanpur Kisan Tractor Parade

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FOREWORD

- *Hannan Mollah*

When this issue of Peasants' Struggle is in press the historic farmers' struggle against the three black farm acts has completed three months. India has not seen such a huge peasant uprising after independence. Lakhs of farmers are gathered at the borders of the National capital Delhi with their tractors and trollies. Farmers all over the country are also in struggle.

The ruling party BJP has passed these acts bypassing the constitutional values and the traditions of parliament, only to serve the interest of domestic and foreign corporates. It is the biggest challenge ever faced by the Modi led NDA government. But it is doggedly not accepting the demand of farmers to repeal the three anti-farmer laws and bring a law for the guaranteed procurement of their produce at C2+50% MSP.

The Central Government instead of listening to the farmers, is trying to discredit them by false allegations and labelling them as anti-nationals. Farmer activists, journalists, news channels supporting this farmer's struggle were also targeted and harassed by the tools of the state. Government wants to crush every disagreement and impose its views at any cost. The recent cases of arrest of hundreds of farmers, and activists Disha Ravi, Nodeep Kaur, Shiv Kumar and journalist Mandeep Punia, the ED raid on news portal NewsClick and the false cases slapped against eminent journalists are only a few examples of this.

When the nation is facing the Covid pandemic and trying to come out from its effects, GDP is shrinking and lakhs of people have lost their jobs. Unemployment is at a record high. Price rise is astronomical, aggravated by the massive rise in petrol, diesel and gas prices due to imposition of government taxes. On the other hand, the government is helping to maximize the profit of corporates at the cost of the toiling masses through its pro-corporate budget.

In this scenario when an authoritarian government is smashing the rights of citizens and attacking the Constitution of India, the only way to protect the country is the path of struggle. And that is exactly what the peasantry of India is doing with great unity.

THE HISTORIC NATIONWIDE FARMERS' CLASS STRUGGLE AGAINST NEO LIBERALISM

- Dr Ashok Dhawale

The unprecedented Kisan struggle that began on November 26, 2020, has been the largest, the longest and the most powerful nationwide farmers' struggle in the history of Independent India. This struggle has several distinctive features.

First, it is led by over 500 farmers' organisations in the country, who have united under the platform of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM). All sections of the peasantry have joined together.

Second, it has combated tremendous repression from BJP governments in the form of teargas shells, water cannons, lathi charges, and after the Government-sponsored violence on January 26, indiscriminate arrests of farmers, FIRs against farmer leaders, eminent journalists, arrests of climate activists, ED raids on independent news portals like NewsClick, and has overcome it all.

Third, it has faced constant defamation from the BJP-RSS and has been accused of being instigated by Khalistanis, Maoists, Naxalites, and by Pakistan and China. It has stood its ground.

Fourth, in spite of lakhs of farmers laying siege to Delhi for over 90 days and nights, it has been completely peaceful and democratic. Over 250 farmers have been martyred in this struggle so far. It has also victoriously combated the criminal conspiracy of violence unleashed by the BJP central government, its police and its agent provocateurs on January 26, Republic Day.

Fifth, it has been entirely secular. The farmers in struggle all over India belong to all religions, all castes and speak all Indian languages. This has made it more difficult to suppress the struggle.

Sixth, after the unprecedented success of

the Bharat Bandh on December 8, with great support from the working class and all other sections of society, it is becoming a people's struggle.

Seventh, and most important, this struggle has directly identified and attacked the corrupt nexus between the BJP-RSS-led central government and the Indian and foreign corporate lobby, symbolised by Ambani and Adani. For the first time, a nationwide call has been given for the boycott of Ambani and Adani products and services. Through its three major demands, this historic class struggle of the peasantry has squarely attacked the neoliberal policies themselves.

REPEAL OF PRO-CORPORATE FARM ACTS

The first demand is the repeal of the three anti-farmer, anti-people and pro-corporate Farm Acts which were passed through Parliament after trampling on all democratic norms. No Kisan organisation worth its name had demanded any of these laws, and no Kisan organisation was ever consulted before these laws were first promulgated as ordinances in June 2020. Although agriculture is a state subject under the Constitution, no state government was ever consulted. The same method was used to annul 29 labour laws that had been won by the working class after bitter struggles and to ram through four anti-worker Labour Codes through Parliament.

The first Farm Act aims to dismantle APMCs and hand over the entire trade in agricultural produce to domestic and foreign corporates. This will destroy farmers and agriculture, and will also compromise the food security of the country. The Bihar state government under Nitish Kumar dismantled APMCs in 2006. As a result, farmers in Bihar are getting around Rs 800 to 1000 less

per quintal of paddy than the MSP which is Rs 1878. This Act eventually aims to do away with MSP and government procurement of food grains altogether. With this, the entire public distribution system will be dismantled. This will hit millions of both urban and rural poor.

The second Farm Act aims to encourage and promote contract farming across the country. As our previous experience of contract farming in India and the world shows, this will only help the powerful corporate companies to loot the farmers. In a travesty of justice, there is no provision for farmers for approaching courts in case of any dispute. The real alternative to corporate farming is co-operative farming, which the government is not at all willing to consider.

The third Farm Act is a disastrous amendment to the Essential Commodities Act. The central government has removed all restrictions on stocks of seven most essential items, viz. rice, wheat, pulses, cooking oil, onions and potatoes. This will give the corporates and the big traders a free hand to hoard and black market these essential items and will hike their prices manifold. This will also endanger food security. In the Global Hunger Index figures declared recently, India already ranks 94th among 107 countries. This will aggravate even further.

LEGAL GUARANTEE OF MSP AND PROCUREMENT

The second demand is for a law to guarantee MSP and procurement of all agricultural produce at one and a half times the comprehensive cost of production (C2 + 50%), as recommended by the National Commission on Farmers, headed by Dr M S Swaminathan. The Modi regime is telling a white lie when it claims that it has already implemented MSP at this rate. It has applied the formula $A2 + FL$, which is much lower than $C2 + 50\%$, and has thus tried to deceive farmers.

Moreover, in most parts of our country, the MSP declared by the central government for 23 different crops has no meaning, simply because there is no government procurement in most of the states. Hence traders routinely buy

agricultural produce from farmers at much less than the MSP. Even in Punjab and Haryana, government procurement is restricted mainly to only paddy and wheat. Hence this is a key demand of farmers from all over the country.

Successive central governments implementing neo liberal policies have increased the cost of production in agriculture manifold over the last three decades. One, by slashing subsidies on agricultural inputs like fertilisers. Two, by encouraging rapacious corporates in the manufacture of seeds, fertilisers and insecticides. Three, by greatly increasing the price of diesel, petrol, power and irrigation. However, the price that the farmer gets for his crop has never increased in the same proportion. This is the root of the agrarian crisis and massive peasant indebtedness, leading to farmer suicides on the one hand and distress sales of farm land on the other.

This is further aggravated by natural calamities like severe droughts, floods, hailstorms and unseasonal rains, with no proper crop insurance cover. The PM Fasal Bima Yojana has proved to be a farce, enriching corporate insurance companies at the expense of farmers. With huge amounts of credit being channelized to the corporates, there is a credit crunch in the farm sector, especially for small and middle farmers. The agricultural import-export policies adopted under WTO dictates and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have also hit farmers very hard.

It is for all these reasons that the farmers struggle has demanded a law to guarantee MSP and procurement at one and a half times the cost of production. Another related demand of the peasant movement has been a complete loan waiver to the peasantry by the central government, which has no compunctions in granting loan waivers and tax waivers of lakhs of crores of rupees per year to its handful of favourite crony corporates.

The third demand is the withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020, which shamelessly promotes further privatisation of

power and aims to end cross subsidy. This will lead to a massive hike in power bills not only for irrigation pumps of farmers, but also for domestic use in both rural and urban areas throughout the country. This will hit all sections of working people.

SAVAGE ATTACK OF NEO-LIBERAL POLICIES



The neo-liberal policies in our country, and in agriculture in particular, were begun by the Congress central government in 1991 and have been taken forward exponentially by the current Modi-led BJP regime.

The 27th national conference of the AIKS held at Hisar in 1992 was the first that was held after the beginning of the neo-liberal policies. It tore apart the neo-liberal policies and warned, “The present policies of the Union government will have a serious adverse impact on the peasantry. This will speed up pauperization of the poor, the small and middle peasants. The number of unemployed youth, both in the urban and the rural sides will again rise to unprecedented heights.” The seminal presidential address of Harkishan Singh Surjeet at this conference elaborated on these and other aspects further. Significantly, the AIKS made this assessment of the neo-liberal policies within a year, when almost all other peasant organisations were supporting the new economic and agricultural policies. The warnings of the Hisar conference were more than vindicated by agrarian developments over the last 30 years.

‘The Alternative Agricultural Policy’ document adopted by the AIKS and the AIAWU in December 2003 broadly divided the post-independence period of capitalist development in agriculture into two phases – the state-sponsored phase from 1947 to 1990 and the liberalisation-privatisation-globalisation (LPG) phase from 1991 onwards. In the light of this, it outlined the two main rural contradictions as follows:

“From the above analysis, it is clear that the present situation in Indian agriculture is characterised by two important contradictions. The first is the sharp division between the rural rich, comprising landlords, big capitalist farmers, large traders, money-lenders and their allies on the one hand and the mass of the peasantry, comprising agricultural workers, poor and middle peasants and rural artisans on the other. The second is the growing opposition to imperialist-driven LPG policies of the government, not only from the mass of the peasantry but also from sections of the rural rich.”

WORST CULPRIT: BJP-RSS’ MODI REGIME

While the first contradiction is and will continue to be very relevant, it is the second contradiction that has been consistently coming to the forefront in the last three decades, and especially in the last seven years of the Modi-led BJP-RSS regime. The last few years have seen a steady strengthening of peasant resistance against the neoliberal assault on their livelihoods by the Modi government. As agrarian distress intensified because of its policies, farmers and rural workers began to strongly raise their voices against them.

Most of these protests by farmers in the recent years - the nationwide peasant struggle in 2015 against the Land Acquisition Ordinance led by the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan (BAA), a joint platform that was initiated by the AIKS; the AIKS-led Kisan struggle of Rajasthan in 2017-18 for loan waiver and MSP; the 11-day united Farmers’ Strike in Maharashtra in June 2017 and the AIKS-

led Kisan Long March in Maharashtra in March 2018, both of which succeeded in wresting a large loan waiver package from the BJP state government and also some progress in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA); the AIKSCC-led Kisan Mukti Sansad in Delhi in November 2017; the CITU-AIKS-AIAWU-led Mazdoor Kisan Rally in New Delhi in September 2018; and the AIKSCC-led Kisan Mukti March in Delhi in November 2018 - were dominated by poor and middle sections of the peasantry and by rural workers as their livelihoods were threatened the most. The participation of rich peasants in these protests was moderate at best.

Over the years, two demands - implementation of the Swaminathan Commission recommendation of guarantee of MSP and procurement at one and a half times the entire cost of production (C2 + 50%) and freedom from debt for farmers - became the main focus of the demands of the peasantry. The current nationwide farmers' struggle represents the climax of all these earlier peasant struggles.

The current farmers' struggle realises that the BJP central government led by Narendra Modi has been the worst culprit in intensifying neo-liberal policies in agriculture, industry and all other sectors. BJP-led state governments have followed suit.

UNPRECEDENTED AGRARIAN CRISIS

The agrarian crisis in India has reached extremely serious proportions due to the neo liberal policies of the last three decades. As per the figures of the National Crime Records Bureau under the Union Home Ministry, nearly four lakh farmers in India have been forced to commit suicide due to indebtedness in the last 25 years from 1995 to 2020. Lakhs of children of Adivasi, Dalit and backward families in our country die every year due to starvation and malnutrition.

Profit maximisation is being sought by squeezing the peasantry through neo-liberal agricultural policies. It is precisely these policies that are fuelling the catastrophic phenomenon

of lakhs of suicides of debt-ridden peasants. Slashing of subsidies and an open door to rapacious MNCs and corporates in the production of agricultural inputs leading to massive increase in the cost of production; consistent refusal to give remunerative prices for agricultural produce under pressure of foreign finance capital; a glut in agricultural imports and a slew of free trade agreements that further ruin the peasantry; crunch in formal agricultural credit and siphoning it away to the corporates, this leading to increased dependence of farmers on usurious private moneylenders; a series of natural calamities like drought, floods, hailstorms as well as attacks by pests and by wild animals and a bogus crop insurance scheme designed to benefit not farmers but corporate insurance companies; savage cuts in public investment in agriculture, especially on irrigation and power with a thrust towards their privatisation - these are some of the main aspects of the neo-liberal attacks on agriculture that are responsible for the deepening agrarian crisis, rising indebtedness and alarming peasant suicides and landlessness.

CLASS IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STRUGGLE

With the enactment of the three Farm Laws in 2020, the Modi government has opened a battle front in which all sections of the peasantry face a crisis. This has enthused all sections of the peasantry to join the struggle, and even sections of rich peasants have joined the struggle in considerable force. Kisans have been protesting against these laws since June 2020 itself, when the three ordinances were first promulgated. The struggle intensified with the ramming through of the laws in Parliament in September and reached its pitch with the Delhi siege from November 26, 2020. Over the last nine months, innumerable protests - with the participation of millions of farmers - have taken place across the country against these ordinances and laws.

But it would be entirely wrong, as the BJP-RSS rumour mill has been churning out, to characterise the present phase of the Kisan struggle as a struggle of the large farmers, or



as a struggle of the Punjab and Haryana farmers alone. The protests against these farm laws must be seen as a continuation of the Kisan protests over the last six years, enumerated above. While poorer sections of the peasantry, who have been hit the hardest by the policies of the Modi government, have led the struggle thus far, enactment of these farm laws has enthused middle and large farmers to also join the struggle in bigger numbers. This has resulted in a consolidation of the class alliance of all sections of the peasantry against this government.

Similarly, the fact that the borders of Delhi are dominated by farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Western UP can hardly be interpreted to mean that only farmers from these states are unhappy with the three laws. It is obvious that the proximity of these states to Delhi meant that the farmers of these states had to take the lead in the battle on the borders of Delhi. It is noteworthy that, even in the protests on the borders of Delhi, farmers from every state have participated. Farmers from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and from as far as Odisha, Andhra and Kerala, have been participating at the Shahajahanpur and Palwal borders. This is apart from the lakhs of farmers who are enthusiastically participating in all the struggle calls of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) in almost all states of the country.

So far as the class aspects of this struggle are concerned, let us consider some hard facts. As per the latest Agricultural Census (2015-16), 86.2 per cent of the cultivators in India have less than 2 hectares (5 acres) of land. The estimate from the 2012-13 NSS Survey of Land and Livestock Holdings is also similar, at 90 per cent. The average size of land holdings in rural India, as per the Agricultural Census of 2015-16, was only 1.08 hectares.

As per the same data source, the share of the number of marginal holdings (i.e., less than 1 hectare) in the total number of operational holdings increased from 62.9 per cent in 2000-01 to 68.5 per cent in 2015-16. The share of small holdings (1 hectare to 2 hectares) decreased from 18.9 per cent to 17.7 per cent during this period. Hence, if we add marginal and small holdings, we see that 86.2 per cent of the holdings were either marginal or small. Large holdings (above 4 hectares) decreased from 6.5 per cent to 4.3 per cent between 2000-01 and 2015-16.

The above figures were for the number of holdings. Let us now come to the area under holdings. The area operated by the marginal and small farmers increased from 38.9 per cent in 2000-01 to 47.4 per cent in 2015-16, while the area operated by large holdings decreased from 37.2 per cent to 20 per cent during this period.

The average MONTHLY income of an agricultural household in India in 2012-13 (according to the Situation Assessment Survey of the NSSO, 70th round) was only Rs 6426. If we consider this for across land size classes, the average monthly income of an agricultural household was Rs 5247 for those with 0.41 to 1 hectare, it was Rs 7348 for those between 1 and 2 hectares. The average monthly income was Rs 19637 where land size was between 4 and 10 hectares and Rs 41388 where land size exceeded 10 hectares.

The average monthly income of an agricultural household in Punjab was Rs 18059, in Haryana it was Rs 14434, in UP it was Rs 4923. On a per capita basis, this comes to be only Rs 3450 in Punjab, Rs 2450 in Haryana and Rs 863 in UP. In most other states, it is even less.

This was the stark reality of the state of farmers in India in 2012-13. Now 8 more years have passed. There has been no NSSO survey in this period. But with the aggressive neo-liberal onslaught of the Modi-led BJP central government that came to power in 2014, and the Covid pandemic in 2020-21, it is crystal clear that the situation of farmers has further deteriorated.

The above facts and figures also clearly imply that a large majority of those who are participating in the current farmers struggle throughout the country come from the 86 per cent whose land holdings are less than 2 hectares. They are the ones who are the hardest hit. The present anti-corporate, issue-based struggle for the repeal of the three Farm Laws and for a law to guarantee a remunerative MSP and procurement, is strengthened by the entry of sections of the rich peasantry. This is a welcome development in the direction of larger peasant unity.

However, as the AIKS has consistently emphasised in its documents and reports, we must realize that the class struggle in the rural areas does not come to an end with the current farmers' struggle. If this struggle is a success,

we would still need to return to our core class issues for our movement to grow. The issues of land, wages, MNREGA, PDS, FRA, and of course the whole gamut of issues related to caste and gender will remain. Both the contradictions explained in the AIKS/AIAWU Alternative Agricultural Policy 2003 and mentioned above will have to be dealt with and fought against together.

TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT FARMERS' STRUGGLE

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' are making 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 defence of our sovereignty, democracy, secularism, federalism and our Constitution itself.

The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) is an integral and important part of the united leadership of this historic farmers' struggle. It appeals to all peasants, agricultural labourers, workers, employees, women, youth and students all over the country to strengthen this crucial class struggle in all possible ways, until victory is achieved.

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FARMERS FIRMLY STAND IN THE WAY AS GOVERNMENT UNLOCKS DOORS FOR CORPORATE LOOT OF AGRICULTURE

- Vijoo Krishnan

An unprecedented resistance has been put up by the peasantry against the three anti-farmer laws which the Narendra Modi led BJP Government and its propaganda machinery claim to be “pro-farmer”. Protests against these laws broke out soon after the three ordinances were introduced by the government in June and have steadily become stronger. All India Kisan Sabha has been in the forefront of this struggle from the very first day. The protests were strongest in Punjab and Haryana, where systems of APMC markets and public procurement are relatively better, as it became apparent that the government was trying to weaken the systems of public procurement to benefit its corporate allies.

The three Ordinances and the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020 were burnt in protest in more than 3000 centres across India within a week of its promulgation. United struggles by workers, peasants and agricultural workers have been going on and a plan was worked out for taking up elaborate struggles. On August 9th, 2020, the anniversary of Quit India Movement and 5th September, 2020 massive united struggles with over 2 million participating across the country in each of these actions have taken place. All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee with over 250 organisations in which AIKS is a major constituent, Central Trade Unions and the Bhumi Adhikar Andolan extended solidarity and have been in the forefront of these struggles.

Government convened the Monsoon session of the parliament in September primarily with the objective of bulldozing the farm bills through the parliament. The intense struggles across the country and especially in Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh created

enough pressure to force the Union Minister for Food Processing Industries Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal to resign from the Union Cabinet “in protest against anti-farmer ordinances and legislation” before the bills were brought to the parliament. It is significant that the Minister from Shiromani Akali Dal, one of the oldest allies of the BJP that stood steadfast with the Narendra Modi regime from 2014 even in the wake of massive united struggles of the peasantry and decisions like the Land Acquisition Ordinance, demonetisation, GST, CAA/NPR/NRC, abrogation of Article 370 etc., was forced to quit.

The Congress Party which in its election manifesto of 2019 had said “Congress will repeal the Agricultural Produce Market Committees Act and make trade in agricultural produce— including exports and inter-state trade — free from all restrictions” was also forced to toe a different line and come out in support of the ongoing protests. This is a vindication of the line consistently taken by the CPI(M) and the Left Parties as well as the All India Kisan Sabha which also is in the forefront of these struggles.

The agitation intensified after the laws were illegitimately passed in the Parliament. The AIKSCC gave a call for Pratirodh Diwas or Resistance Day on 25th September across India. Farmers in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh decided to observe it in the form of a Bandh and massive protest actions were organised by farmers across India. The working class and Central Trade Unions also extended support to the protests. The Left Members of Parliament pushed for Statutory Resolution against the three Bills in Parliament and also protested. For about two months, various forms of protest actions including rasta roko and rail roko were organised. However, even as real issues of farmers and

toiling masses needed to be addressed, the BJP worked overtime to divert attention from them using its propaganda machinery.

Finally, when the government did not pay heed to the demands of farmers, it was decided collectively by all organisations including AIKSCC – and this is when seeds of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella platform leading the struggle, were sown – to march to Delhi on 26th November, 2020 and protest there. Given the logistical difficulties because of travel restrictions and limited availability of trains, it was decided that farmers from States neighbouring Delhi would march to Delhi while others continue protests in their own States. Central Trade Unions also called for a nationwide strike on 26th November.

As the 26th of November came near, farmers from Haryana and Punjab faced an unprecedented situation as the Haryana government deployed massive police force on all entry points from Punjab, and blocked the roads creating barricades with concrete boulders, digging up roads and blocking them with trucks and containers. Many peasant leaders of Haryana were arrested before November 26th to prevent farmers from Haryana from joining the march to Delhi. However, November 25th and 26th turned out to be historic days as farmers from Punjab and Haryana overcame all the hurdles and barricades, braving water cannons, lathi-charges and teargas shelling, and reached the borders of Delhi. This victory greatly enthused peasants and workers across the country, and in the next few weeks, many more peasants from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra came to Delhi, and as they were stopped by the police, set up protest sites at five different entry points of Delhi.

About six weeks have passed since farmers first arrived at the borders of Delhi demanding that the three black laws be repealed by the government. There have been nine rounds of talks between the representatives of the farmers and the government. However, despite the farmers making it loud and clear that they do not

agree and do not want these reforms, the government has refused to accept the demands of the farmers. If the legislations are “pro-farmer”, as this government continues to claim, why are farmers coming out in united protests against these measures? We need to look at each law and understand their implications to find an answer to this question.

Attack on Federal Rights of States to Usher in Company Raj

The BJP Government audaciously claimed that farmers did not get freedom on August 15th, 1947 and it is only on June 3rd 2020 through the three ordinances now being passed as Bills in Parliament the farmers have been granted freedom to sell anywhere in India. Some have also claimed it is the 1991 moment for agriculture; they seem to be forgetting that the policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation ushered in then have led to an acute agrarian crisis and over 4 lakh suicides by distress-stricken farmers. The ‘Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020’ and ‘The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020’ and ‘The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 are a direct attack against federal principles and infringes on the rights of the State Governments. Agriculture is a State subject or forms part of the State list of the Indian Constitution. The BJP Government at the Centre is actually seeking to override the States centralise all powers in its hands to remove all regulations and allow a free hand for corporate companies. The legislations will put farmers at the mercy of agribusinesses, large retailers and exporters. All regulation or controls on private players and agribusinesses will be removed. Although agriculture is a State subject as also trade and commerce within a State is its prerogative, State Governments will have no control over these operations in future. The limited protection provided to farmers will be removed and an unequal playing field with agribusinesses or big traders dictating the terms will become the order of the day. The changes



brought will effectively disempower farmers and usher in Company Raj in agriculture.

Deregulation of Markets to Promote Corporate Profiteering

The BJP Government claims that the 'Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020' will promote barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade and commerce, including e-commerce or outside the physical premises of markets notified under State Agricultural Produce Marketing legislations. It is being claimed that for the first time the farmers have got the freedom to sell their produce wherever they want. This is far from reality and is again only in line with their penchant for attractive packaging of lies and high-pitch propaganda for the same. The truth is that all through the years a majority of marketable surplus in the hands of the farmers has been sold outside the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Market Yards. For 31 crops sold between July, 2012 and June 2013, local private traders were the biggest buyers in the case of 29 crops. Market yards or Mandis not all of which were under APMCs were the biggest buyers in just two crops arhar in kharif season and gram in the rabi season. The share of

farmers selling their crops in APMC yards does not exceed 25 per cent for any crop except soyabean (Roshan Kishore, "Why farmers are opposing pro-farmer reforms", the Hindustan Times, 19th September, 2020). Kerala for instance does not have APMC Markets but the Government intervenes in favour of farmers. Bihar did away with APMCs and that has led to farmers getting even lower prices. Clearly, the network of regulated markets alone cannot be handling the marketing of surplus agricultural produce across India.

The APMC Acts were introduced in the 1960s and 1970s to put a check on the monopoly powers of large traders and big buyers who historically used their economic power and extra-economic means to buy grain from poor farmers at low prices. It was to ensure there would not be exploitation of farmer in price fixation, grading, weighing and payments. Although not always implemented effectively, the APMC Acts introduced a system of auctions which was designed to bring more competition in purchase of agricultural produce. Even with such a mechanism the Minimum Support Price (MSP) could not be ensured. Allowing the traders and big buyers to buy produce outside the

notified markets directly from farmers would mean that the produce would be purchased without auctions and through bilateral negotiations between large traders and poor peasants. Such a system would be inherently biased against the interests of farmers who will not get remunerative prices. The farmers, who often resort to distress sale of their harvest to pay back loans, invest in the next season or for family expenses will be exposed to a grossly unequal system when local traders are replaced by big capital and the Government having no role. Even in existing systems where contract farming is going on farmers are often denied even the prices agreed upon (usually unreasonably low and not adhering to C2+50%) by citing quality or grading issues or even manipulation of weights. Price support will no longer be available and farmers will be exposed to volatile world market prices having to bear burden of price crashes while being unable to gain from high prices. In effect the support system of Minimum Support Price and public procurement will be finished. All talk of One Nation One Market like its earlier slogan of One Nation One Tax will only bring more distress to peasant producers. It is not restrictions in marketing that is causing distress of farmers; it is rather the absence of remunerative prices and assured procurement that is leading to distress. Nowhere in the three Bills there is any talk of assured purchase at not less than the MSP calculated as per C2+50% is mentioned.

When the three laws are read together one can clearly understand how the World Trade Organisation diktats to cut subsidies, reduce public stockholding and such measures are being implemented. The Shanta Kumar Committee had articulated the same and recommended privatisation of procurement and storage operations as well as for a reduced role for the Central Government. The Committee had recommended that the Centre should make it clear to States that it would not accept grains under the Central pool beyond the quantity needed by the State for its own PDS and OWS in case of any bonus being given by them on top of MSP. This is the direction in which the BJP

Government is moving. In a State like Kerala where the LDF Government is procuring paddy at Rs.2750/Quintal that is about Rs.900/Quintal more than the Central MSP one can imagine what impact that will have on the farmers' lives.

Unbridled Freedom for Hoarding and Blackmarketing

Amendments to the ECA removing commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities will not only emerge as a threat to food security but in the context of the above Legislation also allow traders and agribusinesses to buy unlimited quantity directly from farmers and hoard even in times of emergencies. This was the single most important Act to prevent hoarding of these essential commodities particularly in times of crisis such as the present. Even in normal times, it is not uncommon for the big traders to collude and use practices such as hoarding, creating artificial scarcity to drive up retail prices. The ECA was the main legal instrument against such practices. While the BJP Government claims that in situations such as war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity, such agricultural foodstuff can be regulated it in the same breath contradicts the claim by saying in the Bill that the installed capacity of a value chain participant and export demand of an exporter will remain exempted from any such stock limit imposition. The changes to the ECA almost render the original Act null and void. The consumers will be affected and we can visualise artificial scarcity, hoarding and black-marketing as well as price rise with such uncontrolled field for the agribusinesses.

The claim that ECA is being amended for attracting investment for cold chain, storage, agricultural infrastructure and processing industries along with its push for 100 percent FDI in these sectors clearly indicates that the purpose is to allow agri-businesses and corporate houses to take over agriculture. The BJP Government using the COVID Pandemic is going all out to woo private sector and FDI into agriculture by simultaneously withdrawing

from its responsibility of building a network of scientific storage facilities easily accessible to farmers. The agricultural infrastructure fund of Rs.1 lakh crore announced will also be put at the disposal of corporate agribusinesses in the name of developing infrastructure for procurement, cold storages, transportation connecting farm-gate and accumulation points.

Promotion of Corporate Contract Farming

The hollowness of the claim of granting freedom to farmers to sell their produce wherever they want at guaranteed price is exposed when we look at the 'The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020' so attractively packaged. Though the name mentions price assurance nowhere in the act does it say prices given by a trader or agribusiness to the farmer cannot go below the MSP. Neither is there any mention of fixing the prices at 50 percent above the comprehensive cost of production or C2+50% as promised by the BJP and Narendra Modi in 2014. In reality the Central Government has deregulated the markets and withdrawn its commitment to price support and procurement by the two Bills we discussed earlier. It claims that it will empower farmers to engage with processors, aggregators, wholesalers, large retailers and exporters on a level playing field without any fear of exploitation. Can one imagine a level playing field between agribusinesses like Adani Wilmar, Pepsico, Walmart, Reliance Fresh, ITC etc., and a poor indebted farmer or tenant cultivator? They will only shed crocodile tears after finishing off the peasantry. The claim that the risk of market instability will be transferred from the farmer to the sponsor is baseless. Rather than empowering farmers it will eliminate them and aid the big landlords and agribusinesses to profit at their expense. The SDM will be given all powers of dispute settlement over-ruling the power of the courts. It will put the poor farmers having dispute with big corporate companies at the mercy of the bureaucracy. Predatory agribusinesses and corporate forces will take over agriculture dispossessing the peasantry and firmly ensure corporatisation of agriculture. The

thrust to Contract Farming will only enslave the farmers eternally to produce as per the demand and requirement of the agri-businesses. If the intention was genuinely for farmers' empowerment, protection and price assurance why there is no concrete provision for price guarantee in the Bills?

The "1991 moment" has already seen gradual withdrawal of the State, cuts in farm subsidies and deregulation of the agricultural input markets. It has only lead to removal of price controls and rising input costs as corporate monopolies were given a free hand to fix prices. It has only meant increasing costs of production and falling prices of produce. Farmers aware of this two way squeeze are no longer going to be fooled by seemingly attractive false promises of Narendra Modi and the BJP Government. These moves as well as amendments to Electricity Act to remove subsidies, amendments to EIA; changes in land and labour laws are all at the bidding of corporates. During a pandemic and lockdown the unusual haste in pushing through these legislations in the Parliament without any consultation with farmers, State Governments and in the absence of any such popular demand from below also indicate that the BJP Government have much to hide.

Agriculture Must Be Remunerative

The entire peasantry and toiling masses have suffered huge losses of incomes due to the unplanned Lockdown. Instead of providing relief to them with income support, loan waivers, providing foodgrains, generating employment and health facilities the BJP Government is only showering unending benefits as well as concessions to the corporate companies. Rather than facilitating corporate loot and dependence on FDI, the government must ensure cooperative farming by promoting cooperatives of the peasantry and agriculture workers. What is required is remunerative Minimum Support Price for all crops at C2+50% with guaranteed procurement, employment at minimum wage of Rs 600/day to all agricultural workers, income support of at least Rs,7,500/- per month to all non-tax paying poor, at least Rs.300/day as unemployment wages under MGNREGA,

increase of PM-KISAN to Rs.18,000/- per year and extending benefits to tenant farmers also and complete loan waiver for landless, tenant, small and middle peasants. Food security and comprehensive social security must also be ensured.

The Struggle Will Intensify and Continue Until the Anti-farmer Laws are Repealed

After the initial rounds of talks, the Government accepted that there are certain flaws with the laws but insisted that these flaws could be removed by making amendments in the laws. Although a few points were mentioned on which the government was willing to make amendments, the proposals sent by the government did not even spell out the specifics of these amendments. The AIKSCC and the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella platform of all the organisations which took a concrete shape as the battle with the government intensified, rejected the amendments because these were clearly not adequate to address the concerns of farmers. As has been explained in the earlier sections, these laws are fundamentally flawed in their approach, and this reflects in every single provision of these laws. Given this, it is not possible to make amendments in the laws to satisfy the demands of the farmers. Farmers are united and have decided that nothing short of repealing the laws would satisfy them.

The AIKSCC and Sanyukt Kisan Morcha have decided to intensify the struggles until the government accepts the demands of the farmers. Along with a call to farmers to come to Delhi in largest possible numbers, mass sit-ins were organised in all the State capitals between January 23rd and 26th. On January 26th, the Republic Day, Kisan Mazdoor Parades were organised in Delhi and all the State capitals after the official functions concluded. The Central Trade Unions also actively participated in these protests.

Historic United Struggle Braving Extreme Repression

The struggle against the 2020 farm laws is

historic. The sheer scale of the protests is remarkable. The scale at which solidarity has been created among different sections of the working people is historic. The manner in which farmers have braved the biting cold of December in Delhi is what has won the hearts of many. Support has poured in from other sections of the working people as well as various organisations in Delhi. Villages from neighbouring areas of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have ensured that there is no shortage of food supplies to protest sites. Farmers themselves have shown an incredible organisational capacity as tractor trolleys have been turned into homes, camp sites created, massive langars set up and arrangements made for accessing basic amenities. The force which the farmers have struck the ruling classes is historic. On 26th millions of people participated in the historic Kisan Mazdoor Parade across the country. Around the National Capital Region lakhs of tractors and other vehicles participated in the parade after hoisting the national flag, singing the national anthem and paying homage to the martyrs. It is for the first time since 15th August 1947 that such large number of Indian citizens led by the peasantry celebrated Republic Day. The parade was held in all States from Kashmir in the North to Kanyakumari in the South and from Gujarat in the West to Tripura in the East. It has reaffirmed the resolve of the people to defeat the anti-farmer, anti-worker Acts brought by the BJP Government to facilitate corporate loot and sent a clear message to the Government. What started as a farmers' movement has become a people's movement with the working class, women, students, youth and oppressed sections taking active part.

The overwhelmingly peaceful protest has rattled the BJP Government and ruling classes. Over the last two months the ruling dispensation and the corporate media has resorted to continuous provocation and spreading of lies. Corporate media and the Sangh Parivar which went all out to malign the peaceful united movement that has been going on for two months are now resorting to a conspiracy to discredit the farmers' movement. Corporate media were silent about the martyrdom of over



150 farmers in the last two months of struggle and only carried out a malicious campaign at the behest of the BJP. There have also been many instances of farmers handing over agent provocateurs to the police including yesterday; notably many claimed to have been sent by the police themselves. After yesterday's isolated incidents in the Capital condemned by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) and AIKS, the BJP Government and corporate media is seeking to paint the farmers' movement as an unruly, violent movement. Rather the SKM leadership intervened effectively in a timely manner to resist a small section which was trying to force tractors to deviate from the designated route towards the Red Fort. It stopped movement of tractors from Singhu Border at 2 PM itself and also called off the Parade at 6 PM. This effectively isolated the group that played into the hands of the Government and their game-plan. The events point clearly to the complicity of the BJP Government with the disruptive elements.

Present day incarnations of General Dyer are building barriers like at the borders between two warring nations at Gazipur border to encircle farmers protesting for their rights. The apartheid wall by Israel or Trump's wall to keep out immigrants from Mexico seems to be their inspiration. Digging trenches, laying iron spikes

on roads, barbed wire fencing, cutting water supply, electricity and internet, foisting false cases, arresting journalists, agent provocateurs and organised goons aided by police what not!

Farmers say get all the weapons in your armoury. How many will you keep barricaded? How many will you keep in prisons? We will build bridges that will overcome these barriers and reach out to every worker, every person in every village and every town. They who drive the concrete mixers or build concrete walls need food and so do those who ordered them to build these concrete walls encircling farmers. This country and its people will stand by the farmers who produce food and unite to defeat the fascist forces. We will together protect our lands and resist corporate takeover of agriculture as it is a life and death question for us say the farmers.

Those who know the history of fascism know the Reichstag was burnt down by the Nazis themselves and also know whose conspiracy was behind the Red Fort incidents. The world will yet again witness an inglorious end of the fascist forces and all their propaganda machinery will fail to retrieve what would then remain. There is no doubt that not only will farmers go back only after tasting the fruit of victory but this would change the course of history of India. □

AGRARIAN QUESTION AND NATIONAL POLITICAL SITUATION

- P Krishnaprasad

The ongoing farmers' struggle at the borders of Delhi, the National Capital under the banner of Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) is not a spontaneous protest. This struggle, the largest in mass participation and striking power since Independence, is the continuation of the agitations by the peasantry and the working class during the last three decades against the State policies especially the neo-liberal policies being imposed on the people by successive Union Governments.

The World Capitalist System that includes India is facing a systemic crisis. Since the crisis in the US economy in 2008, the world economy is facing relentless decline. It was the Great Depression of the 1930s that changed the political geography of the world's nations and eventually strengthened the socialist camp. Within two decades, both India and China became liberated from the colonial clutches. In this historical context, evaluating the ongoing farmers' united resistance against the corporate dominance in India, the country with the second largest population in the world, is politically significant.

The big capitalist class in India faces a decisive crisis. They are in an illusion that they can overcome the crisis by collaborating with international finance capital as well as intensifying the exploitation of the two producing classes, the peasantry and the working class. The enactment of the 4 Labour Codes that negate the minimum wage and many other benefits, and the 3 Farm Acts that negate minimum price for agricultural produce are precisely in this direction. On the other hand, the peasantry and the working class are forced to confront corporate dominance that causes severe pauperisation and decline of their

purchasing power- that induces capitalism to plunge into deeper crisis.

With capitalist growth in agriculture, the price of agro produce has been the main income and the only source of existence of the peasant households. Naturally the minimum support price becomes the main demand of struggle along with protection of ownership on farm land and cattle wealth. As far as agricultural labourers are concerned, their main demands are minimum wage and protection of employment. In this context, the agrarian question becomes the major issue in the national political situation, though there are differences in the degree of intensity of the agrarian crisis from region to region.

The foremost concern is the resolution of the agrarian question. The big capitalist class that led the Indian State since Independence, instead of implementing comprehensive land reforms, forged an alliance with the landlord class. Instead of unleashing productive forces through agrarian reforms aimed at development based on domestic industrialisation- with thrust on agro based large industries, they have been surrendering to the neo-liberal model of development by collaborating with international finance capital. Even after 73 years, 60% of landholders have only 5% of the agricultural land while 10% of landholders possess 55%. The centralisation of agricultural land is being intensified due to the pauperisation of large number of small and middle peasant households who are forced to join the class of migrant workers. This centralisation of land is the major reason for the capitalist crisis in India. The BJP led Union Government is putting forward the proposal of corporatisation of agriculture as the solution for agrarian crisis. Policy of



comprehensive land reforms and agro based industrial development in order to protect interests of the vast peasantry is not acceptable to the BJP and RSS. This political stand of the BJP has started eroding its mass base across the country wherever the farmers struggle is picking up.

Globally, the food processing sector based on value addition of agricultural produce shows high growth. Studies conducted worldwide depict that only a share of 10% or below of the value of the value-added consumer products are paid back to the peasantry as their price. In Punjab, farmers used to get only Rs 18 to Rs 30 per kilo through intermediaries for Basmati paddy. The Adani Group sells their Fortune brand of special Basmati rice at Rs.208 per kilo. There are branded Basmati products sold in the range of Rs.700 to Rs 2200 per kilo in the global market. The coffee growers of Karnataka and Kerala are getting Rs 60 to Rs 70 per kilo for their coffee cherry while the Nestle group sells their brand instant coffee products – 2.5 kilo coffee beans is required for producing 1 kilo instant coffee powder - at an average rate of Rs.3000 per kilo. There are brand instant coffee products that sell

in the range of Rs. 8000 to Rs 12000 per kilo. The monopoly ownership of large scale agro-industries enables the corporate forces to accumulate huge profit.

The 3 Farm Acts represent the interests of the corporate forces. The need is to bring laws to protect the interests of the peasantry. The policy towards contract farming depends on which class interest that represents. Alienating the poor and middle peasant households and agricultural workers from the agricultural sector will lead to severe socio-political impact and the ongoing farmers' struggle actually resists this danger. The big capitalist class, working in collaboration with international finance capital, has developed a class conflict with the entire peasantry, including by and large the rich peasants and sections of capitalist landlords. This conflict amongst the ruling class partners creates possibilities for the working class, poor peasantry and agricultural labour to intensify the class struggle against the corporate-landlord dominance. The forceful pursuit of neo-liberal economic reforms combined with the loot of our national assets through disinvestment and rampant privatisation is giving rise to new

conflicts emerging between the big capitalists and the non-big capitalists. These conflicts create possibilities and potential for building wider unity against the BJP and its policies.

Agriculture is a state subject. BJP's drive to establish its total hegemony and replace the federal structure of our Constitution with that of a unitary State has resulted in serious attacks on the rights of the elected state governments. The regional parties, who head governments in many states, are coming under sharp attack. The communal polarisation accompanied by this hegemonic drive is forcing many regional parties, who head governments, to come out and oppose the BJP in a forthright manner. The oldest allies of BJP in NDA, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the Akali Dal in Punjab have left the NDA and come out openly against the BJP. The growing contradiction between the BJP and the regional parties also has the potential for building wider unity against the BJP.

While the differences among the peasant classes do exist, the growing unity – among the peasant masses including middle and poor peasants and agricultural workers along with sections of the capitalist landlords, capitalist farmers and rich peasants- against the corporate forces will further widen the political unity of the people against the ruling classes. The farmers' struggle reflects this growing wider people's unity against the domestic and foreign capitalist class. This unity between the peasantry and the working class opens the possibility of intensifying political polarisation. The struggle against the 3 Farm Acts and 4 Labour Codes could open the way to resolve the agrarian question of India. This struggle will intensify in the near future and influence the national political situation decisively. In states like Kerala, the peasants and workers are demanding the post land reform stage of agrarian reform – developing crop based agro-processing industries and modern market network and ensure employment possibilities, minimum wage and minimum support price.

There are two ways in order to ensure MSP@C2+50% and minimum wage to workers.

1. Legislation to enforce the corporate sector to

- share the surplus they build up through value addition and marketing of agro produce with the respective farmers.
2. Put clauses in the law to establish and promote 'Social Cooperatives' – institutions free from bureaucratic control and under the leadership of peasants and workers with financial and administrative autonomy - to develop crop based agro processing industries and market network with modern infrastructure, have the benefit of financial support and government guarantee, with the responsibility to ensure the surplus sharing as additional price and additional wage for the primary producers.

The market intervention model developed in Kerala, based on the cooperative sector, needs to be debated across the country. When the Union Government declares MSP@ only Rs 1868 per quintal for paddy without ensuring procurement, the state government in Kerala has been successful in providing MSP@ Rs 2850 per quintal with procurement system to cover the entire produce with the support of cooperatives. Cooperative market has been developed for crops including rubber and coconut. However, to ensure MSP@C2+50% the initiative by the Union Government is essential. In the current Budget, 2021-22 the LDF Government has declared MSP for coffee cherry - for first time in India - at Rs. 90 per kilo against the existing market rate of Rs 65 per kilo. The plan is to process coffee and market coffee powder in the brand name "Wayanad Coffee" and then share the surplus as additional price to coffee growers. Similarly, surplus can be developed through value addition of all crops - including rubber and coconut - and shared with peasants. This is the model the peasant movement is demanding from the Union Government instead of imposing corporatisation of Agriculture through the 3 Black Farm Acts.

Significance of Peasant Cooperative Plan (PCP) - Peasant agriculture in India cannot be protected without a Peasant Cooperative Plan (PCP) to modernise agriculture based on comprehensive land reform, agro based industrialisation and IT based modern market network with surplus sharing. 86% of peasant



households in India have less than 2 hectares (5 acres) of land. By transferring the land to the next generation, farm size declines further, thus unable to earn income sufficient to sustain the peasant family. What is the solution? Convert petty farm production through PCP to large scale production by bringing together the poor and middle farmers and agricultural workers through social cooperatives. And develop agro processing industries and modern market network under their social ownership and share the surplus thus created to the peasants and workers to ensure new employment opportunities stage by stage and protect livelihood of all who at present are solely dependent on the agricultural sector. This is in a nutshell what the LDF Government in Kerala has put forward through plans like 'Subhiksha Keralam' and many cooperative interventions in agriculture. This is the essence of the Left and democratic alternative against the neo-liberal model of the Modi-led BJP regime.

The Peasant Cooperative Plan to protect peasant agriculture is highly significant in addressing the agrarian question in India. The consistent struggles unleashed by the Trade

Union Platform that includes CITU and the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) that includes AIKS have led to the unprecedented unity and ongoing widespread struggle under the banner of Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM). The resolution of the farmers' struggle can be realised only by further intensifying worker-peasant unity and wider unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces. This is the only political alternative that can emerge against the BJP that stands for the interests of international finance capital and capitalist-landlord ruling classes in India.

Class struggles when they acquire mass character will pave the way for political changes. In the context of the systemic crisis of the world capitalism and the resultant recession across India, the agrarian question will be decisive in national politics and will be reflected in the five states that are going to face state assembly elections, including Kerala and West Bengal. The re-election of LDF Government in Kerala and victory of the Left, democratic and secular forces and their allies in other states are important to advance the struggle against corporate exploitation. □

THOUSANDS OF WOMEN LEAD PROTESTS ON MAHILA KISAN DIVAS

- Mariam Dhawale

There was massive and enthusiastic participation of thousands of women all across the country on Mahila Kisan Divas on January 18. Six national women's organisations – All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA), Pragatisheel Mahila Sangathan (PMS), All India Agragami Mahila Samiti (AIAMS) and All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangathan (AIMSS) had decided to hold joint protests on January 18 to express solidarity with the farmers' struggle. Apart from the demands of the struggle, women also demanded food, work, health services, waiver of loans of SHGs and action against harassment by MFIs.

WOMEN'S ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED

The three farm laws and the power bill will further worsen the situation for women whose lives are already facing a severe crisis due to skyrocketing prices of essential commodities which has made it impossible to make both ends meet. The new Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act will aggravate the situation even more. The targeted public distribution system is in disarray. The distribution of free food grains has been discontinued since December. Regular food grains distribution through the ration shops has been disrupted. The NFHS5(National Family Health Survey) shows that in 13 out of 22 states, child stunting has deteriorated over the preceding four years.

Even after all the tall promises regarding the provision of work made by the central government, the reality is that no work is available. MNRGA work has been practically stopped. Women in the unorganised sector have been demanding the implementation of the Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme as the means of livelihood have shrunk during this pandemic.

Indebtedness has increased manifold.

Women are forced to sell their jewellery or other household valuables to tide over the family crunch, cut kitchen expenses or make several other compromises to clear debts. Anger amongst women against the Modi government was clearly perceptible during this campaign. Here is a brief state-wise report of January 18.

AIDWA has been organising a continuous campaign against the three farm laws in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and in several other states for the last three months.

Haryana – The Haryana unit of AIDWA has been very active. Women have held meetings, distributed leaflets in Hindi and Punjabi, written songs and slogans and participated in the protests at all five Delhi borders in increasing numbers. Many of the women were arrested too. AIDWA activist teams held meetings in 150 villages and 70 colonies in Haryana and distributed 35,000 leaflets.

Activists are participating in the blockades since they began on November 26. A camp was set up at the Tikri border from December 15 to 21 and women from different districts participated daily. Help was organised for women from Punjab who had joined the sit-ins.

Kisan Mahila Divas was observed in 50 places in 20 districts of Haryana with participation of 500 to 4000 women in each of these demonstrations. Women themselves drove tractors and trollies to reach the places of protest. Women also took part at the Singhu, Tikri and Palwal borders on that day. To ensure massive participation of women, AIDWA held a widespread campaign amongst women farmers and also distributed leaflets which explained the gender aspect of the three farm laws. Banners

26 January Kisan Tractor Parade





18 February 2021 Rail Roko





were put up at various places depicting the role of women farmers. Women will participate in huge numbers in the January 26 Republic Day Kisan Parade.

Punjab – Women from districts near Singhu border have been participating in the blockades at regular intervals. AIDWA Amritsar unit organised a 'Jaggo' (wake up) on January 9-10. Copies of the three farm acts were burnt in Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Jalandhar and Bhatinda. Dharnas, candle marches and rallies were held in Chandigarh, Bhatinda, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Pathankot and Gurdaspur on Mahila Kisan Divas. AIDWA mobilised a large number of women in the joint rally held in Amritsar.

Rajasthan – AIDWA held a protest in Jaipur on January 17 and a bus with women activists joined the farmers at Shahjahanpur border on January 18. Women protested in several villages and at the collector office in Ganganagar. Women from Bikaner district have been continuously present at the Shahjahanpur border. Women from Sikar, Hanumangarh and Alwar also participated at the Shahjahanpur border in large numbers. Hanumangarh saw protests in 10 places in villages and at the tehsil level. A torchlight march was held at the district level. Kota and Jodhpur held demonstrations. Memoranda demanding the repeal of the three farm laws were sent to the President of India from many districts.

Delhi – Meetings and leaflet distribution were organised at the local level in districts to explain the anti-farmer aspects of the three farm laws. These laws were burnt in five places jointly with the Delhi for Farmers platform. A large number of women participated at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders. General secretary, Mariam Dhawale, joint secretary, Asha Sharma and vice-president, Jagmati Sangwan were present at the Singhu and Tikri borders on January 18.



Uttar Pradesh – The three farm laws were burnt in Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Chitrakoot and Jalaun districts on January 13. A jatha of women from Kanpur under the leadership of vice president, Subhashini Ali arrived by bus and took part in the protest at Ghazipur on January 18. Women from Agra participated at the Palwal border. Scores of women took part in actions in Sultanpur, Chandoli and Sonbhadra districts.

Madhya Pradesh – Women from Bhopal, Gwalior, Guna, Morena, Datia, Jabalpur and Bhind are regularly participating in the blockade at the Palwal and Mewat borders. They are holding meetings of women in the nearby villages surrounding these borders. Actions were organised in Bhopal, Rewa, Gwalior, Morena, Kailaras, Bhind, Guna, Anuppur and Sehore districts. Leaflets were distributed for this campaign. Meetings were held in the rural areas of Bhopal. On January 3, AIDWA and BGVS jointly organised a jatha to Palwal and had an enthusiastic cultural programme and gave speeches despite heavy downpour.

Kerala – AIDWA along with nine women's organisations, under the banner of Left Democratic Women's Front, organised a protest rally in front of the Raj Bhavan at Trivandrum on January 18, in which 350 women took part. All state office-bearers of the nine organisations participated in this march. More than 4,000 women participated in the day-long satyagraha held in all 14 districts. At Palghat, women farmers came riding the tractors filled with their crops. AIDWA conducted a webinar

related to the Kisan Mahila Divas in which Mariam Dhawale and Annie Raja delivered speeches.

West Bengal – Mahila Kisan Divas was observed in 20 districts. Actions were held in more than five local committees in each of these 20 districts. Effigies of the prime minister, Narendra Modi and the three farm laws were burnt. Hundreds of women will participate in the three-day sit-in organised jointly with the AIKS from January 20-22 in Kolkata. Various women's organisations including AIDWA organised programmes in different districts.

Tripura – Due to police repression and attack on the AIDWA state secretary, Jharna Das Baidya by BJP goons the protests in the state had to be postponed.

Tamil Nadu – A militant protest demonstration of more than 200 women broke the police cordon and marched to the Raj Bhavan in Chennai. This protest was jointly organised by the All Women Federation consisting of 40 women's organisations. The police later arrested all the women.

Andhra Pradesh – Around 3,000 women participated in rallies, meetings, dharnas and human chains organised at 65 places in 21 districts. In Visakhapatnam city a scooter rally was held. Impressive rallies were held in Vijayawada and Anantapur. Nearly 10,000 anganwadi workers actively participated in 186 areas.

Telangana - Joint rallies under the banner of United Action of Women's Associations were held in 10 districts attended by 863 people. Women's organisations and transgenders held a rally at the state centre. Effigies of the central ministers were also burnt.

Karnataka – Joint jatha was organised in the state. Women on 20 bikes and two tractors protested at the district collector's office in Mandya. A total of 400 women participated in protests in Bellary, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Bidar, Kolar and Bengaluru.

Maharashtra – More than 2,000 women participated in actions in over 100 places in Thane-Palghar, Solapur, Mumbai, Raigad, Nagpur, Wardha, Amravati, Pune, Sangli and Satara districts. The three farm laws were also burnt. The protest action in Mumbai and a convention of women farmers in Pune was organised jointly with other women's organisations. Thousands of women will take part in the vehicle jatha of the AIKS, CITU, AIAWU, AIDWA, DYFI and SFI from Nashik to Mumbai on January 23-24 and in the joint state-level mahapadav and march to Raj Bhavan from January 24 to 26 in Mumbai.

Bihar – A joint demonstration was held at the Kargil Chowk in Patna. Around 5,000 women took part in the protests in Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Phulparas, Ghoghardiha, Saharsa, Khagaria, Isuapur, Parsa, Samastipur, Arrah, Bhabua, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Bettiah and Darbhanga.

Odisha – A colourful march to Raj Bhavan was organised at Bhubaneswar. Demonstrations were organised in Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack and Ganjam. AIDWA conducted campaigns at the unit and block levels with announcements through loudspeakers fitted on autorickshaws. Joint rallies were held in Kendrapara, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj. Nearly 500 women participated in these protests.

Assam - AIDWA organised protest actions in 14 places in 10 districts with a total participation of 873 women. Joint protests with fraternal organisations were held in five districts. Memoranda were sent to the prime minister.

Jharkhand – Hundreds of women participated in 18 units in Pakur, Dhanbad, Ranchi, East Singhbhum, Godda, Seraikela, Jamtara and Sahibganj districts.

Gujarat – More than 250 women participated in the joint protests held in the state.

Protests were also held in Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and other states. □

AIKS ON UNION BUDGET 2021

BUDGET BETRAYS THE FARMERS' DEMANDS THE UNION GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO PEDDLE LIES AND BRAZEN PRIVATISATION

The Union Financial Budget presented today in the Parliament for the year 2021-22 had almost nothing new to offer for Indian agriculture. It has completely disregarded the farmers protesting across the country demanding fair remuneration of their toil and labour. In 2020-21, the budgeted allocation for agriculture was Rs 134349 crore, which has fallen to Rs 122961 crore in 2021-22. There has been an overall reduction of 8 % in allocations towards agriculture even in nominal terms. While in 2019-20 and 2020-21, the procurement of rice and wheat was higher because the open market prices were too low and the government was forced to procure more grain although the procurement levels remained much less than the requirement and a vast majority of farmers ended up selling their produce at low prices. On the other hand, distribution of grains through the Public Distribution System (PDS) had to be raised in 2020-21 given the Covid situation. If we keep these aside, the spending for most schemes in agriculture declined in 2020-21, and shows no promise of rise in 2021-22. For instance, the PM-Kisan scheme was provided a budget allocation of Rs 75,000 crore in 2020-21, but the actual expenditure was only Rs 65,000 crore. This shows the hollowness of the government's claim that it used the PM-Kisan scheme to help farmers during the lockdown period. Further, only Rs 65,000 crore has been allocated for 2021-22. Just to give another example, in the Pradhan

Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, the actual expenditure in 2019-20 was Rs 2700 crore and the budgeted expenditure for 2020-21 was Rs 4000 crore. But the actual expenditure in 2020-21 was Rs 2563 crore, which is lower than the actual expenditure in 2019-20.

The Finance Minister continued to state the falsehood that MSPs are already 50% above the cost of production. The truth is that the government considers the A2+FL cost as the cost of production and not the C2 cost as suggested by the Swaminathan Commission. It is also a fact that a majority of farmers in India are still outside the procurement network, and are denied access to MSPs. However, the government has announced no plan on how to expand the access of farmers to procurement or MSP. In fact, the Finance Minister has tried to mislead by comparing in her budget speech procurement of last year with procurement in 2013-14, when open market prices were higher than the MSP for many crops and farmers did not need to sell the produce to government agencies. The Finance Minister has herself



stated that only 1.54 crore farmers benefited from MSPs for paddy and wheat in 2020-21. This is an admission that a vast majority of farmers have not benefited from the MSP-based procurement. In fact, its medium-term plan is to reduce procurement, which is visible through its insistence on implementing the three Farm Acts.

The rise in food subsidy is just illusory. The government has, over the past few years, failed to pay its dues to the FCI and was forcing the FCI to borrow high-interest loans from the NSSF. It is welcome that the budget has announced its intent of not burdening the FCI with loans, but it has remained silent on the past dues to be paid to the FCI. Unless these dues are paid, the financial viability of the FCI will remain stressed. It also remains to be seen whether the government would meet this obligation to the FCI in 2021-22.

The Budget provides a roadplan for greater privatisation garbing it under monetisation. The privatisation of public infrastructure includes warehouses run by NAFED. This is in continuation with already existing agreements between the Food Corporation of India and Adani Logistics for building and managing silos. Further, the Union government has announced extension of the 'Operation Greens' scheme to 22 perishable commodities. The scheme provides credit subsidy to promote agri-logistics, which at present is largely controlled by large agro based companies. The Union Budget therefore provides the vision of agri-business led infrastructure development.

The budget speech gave much emphasis on infrastructure development. This again was a hollow claim. The actual allocations for Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana or the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in rural areas are stagnant for about two years now, and receive no rise in allocations in the budget. With a focus on large scale infrastructure projects through private partnerships, the Budget maintains a dead silence on land acquisition and compensation. Large scale land acquisition of farm lands would be required for the highway

projects that have been announced.

Considering the unemployment scenario in rural India, which was at 9 per cent even in December, 2020 according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), it is inexcusable that the Finance Minister's speech did not have a single mention of MGNREGS. The Scheme has proved to be an essential lifeline under Covid for the rural poor and returning migrants. The budgeted estimates under the scheme for 2021-22 have been slashed significantly by 34 per cent as compared to the revised estimates of 2020-21. In fact, if we compare the actual expenditure in 2019-20 (Rs 71686 crore) with the budgeted expenditure in 2021-22 (Rs 73000 crore), there is a fall in spending in real terms. The budget was a good opportunity for the government to raise the number of days of employment through MGNREGS to 150 days. The government has made it clear that it has no such intention. This will definitely have an impact on generation of employment days as well as creation of public infrastructure, and overall demand generation in the rural economy.

The budget has also given a raw deal to the livestock farmers of India. This shows the sheer doubletalk of a government, whose spokespersons praise the role of cattle as "gaurmata". The actual spending for the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying was Rs 2706 crore in 2019-20. This fell to Rs 2630 crore in 2020-21. The budgeted allocation for 2021-22 is Rs 3057 crore, which is hardly a rise in real terms.

In sum, the government appears to be following a strategy of squeezing the peasantry. There are no major additional allocations in agriculture or major new schemes. The Covid lockdown period had seen the Indian peasant show stellar commitment to the maintenance of food security in the country. The government, however, has paid them nothing in return. A significant rise in allocations to agriculture was expected, but the government has disappointed the peasantry. □

**REPEAL PRO-CORPORATE FARM ACTS
ENSURE LEGAL GUARANTEE FOR MSP**

ENACT ALTERNATIVE LAWS TO PROTECT FARMERS' INTEREST

The success of the 6th February Chakka Jam and 18th February Rail Roko has effectively manifested the pan India character of the ongoing farmers' struggle and sounds a warning to the Modi-led BJP Government. AIKS demands that the Modi Government should give up its arrogance, repeal the 3 Farm Acts, withdraw the amendments to the Electricity Act, make MSP@C2+50% a legal right with guaranteed procurement for all crops across the country and amend the anti-farmer clauses in the Pollution Ordinance 2020 immediately. All cases foisted on farmers and leaders of farmers' organizations, journalists and others must be unconditionally withdrawn to resolve the genuine issues raised by the farmers' struggle.

The PM while speaking in both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha had accused the protesting farmers of not being ready for reforms and standing for maintaining the status quo. Nothing could be further from the truth. Farmers are opposing the pro-corporate reforms and stand for pro-farmer reforms. The PM is deliberately trying to misguide the people due to his adamant pro-corporate bias.

The Prime Minister's comment that 'MSP was there, is there and will remain there' is part of a deliberate campaign to misguide the people. Narendra Modi and the BJP had promised MSP by ensuring 50% profit above cost of production in the 2014 Lok Sabha election manifesto, as per the recommendation of the National Commission for Farmers that was headed by Dr M S Swaminathan. During the last 7 years in power, the PM did not implement this promise and is hence directly responsible for the ongoing farmers struggle.

The existing rate of MSP based on A2+FL calculation is not remunerative and according to reports only 6% of the farm produce based on the estimate of Gross Value Added (GVA) has been procured by the Government by providing this meager MSP. Hence huge majority of the farmers are forced to sell far below the announced rate of MSP, making MSP only notional for the vast majority. For example the rate of MSP for paddy is Rs 1868 per quintal but farmers in Bihar, Jharkhand and many other states get only Rs 800 to Rs 1200 per quintal. It is significant that the LDF Government in Kerala provides Rs 2850 per quintal for paddy with assured procurement with the support of the cooperative sector.

The benefit of surplus created out of value addition of farm produce is amassed by the corporate companies. For example, the farmers receive price at the range of Rs 18 to Rs 30 per kilo from the intermediaries for Basmati paddy while the branded Fortune Special Basmati Rice of the Adani group is being sold at the price of Rs.208 per kilo. Some of the brands are sold in the range of Rs 700 to Rs 2200 per kilo. Likewise, in the coffee belt the farmers get Rs 120 to Rs 130 per kilo for coffee beans while the corporate sector sells instant coffee powder at an average of Rs 3000 per kilo. Certain brands of coffee like Nestle Blend 37 and Nescafe Gold Organic were being sold at around 12,000/Kg a few months back and even now are being sold at Rs.8,000/- to about Rs.10,000/Kg.

This sort of loot and exploitation by the corporate sector and their intermediaries in the market is one of the main reasons for the widespread indebtedness of the peasant households and the resultant massive peasant

suicides. Every hour two farmers are committing suicide in India and 2468 peasants per day are forced to give up agriculture.

In the context of the ongoing farmers' struggle, AIKS demands that the Union Government consider the following-

1. The Union Government after consulting all the State Governments must bring the law for MSP@C2+50% for all crops across the country with guaranteed procurement to ensure MSP as the right of the farmers.

2. The primary responsibility to provide MSP@C2+50% lies on those entities that procure the produce from the farmers. These entities earn income and profit and sustain out of the trading and processing of farm produce and marketing of value added consumer products. The MSP law must make them liable to share certain percentage of the surplus with the primary producers. Hence, the State Governments should enact a law with the clauses that make it essential for the agro processing industries, trade and market enterprises in the private, public and cooperative sectors to share the surplus they acquire through trade and value addition with the respective farmers to ensure MSP@C2+50% . Noncompliance shall be treated as an offence.

3. The state legislation should include clauses to promote non-profitable social cooperative institutions of peasants and workers

to promote collective cultivation, procure and trade stock, undertake agro-processing and retail marketing of consumer products and ensure surplus sharing through a transparent IT-enabled system to provide farmers MSP@C2+50%. The farmers especially those who have small holdings have to be supported to develop social cooperatives to promote collective farming that will help to take advantage of the economy of scale to minimise expenditure, maximise profit and avoid exploitation by the intermediaries.

4. The Central Government that had centralised the tax system through GST since June 2017 should bring adequate budgetary provisions/bank guarantee to avail loan for establishing Price Stabilisation Fund- PSF in support of the State Governments to ensure that producers of all crops get MSP@C2+50% with guaranteed procurement. The PSF is to support the farmers when the price is lower than MSP, and when the rate in the public market is higher the surplus thus received must be added to the PSF. Thus this Fund can work independently and stand without even the financial support of the Government in future. (As the examples of Insurance Fund and Pension Fund show.)

AIKS greets the entire democratic movement of the country including political parties, trade unions, all the mass and class organizations and progressive groups and individuals for the support and solidarity extended by them so far to the farmers' struggle. We appeal to all of them to take urgent steps to advance the campaign in the above direction, in the context of the extensive efforts under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the BJP-RSS to defame the struggle through a vilification campaign and to suppress it through its repressive measures.

We are annexing the resolution adopted by the AIKC meeting on 6th November 2020 and the Model Bill prepared that explains the above aspects in details.



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ENGELS ON THE PEASANT WAR IN GERMANY

- Prabhat Patnaik

At a time when peasant masses in the country are engaged in a valiant struggle for the repeal of the central government's three infamous laws, and have laid peaceful siege to Delhi, braving rains and bitter cold, it is worth recalling Friedrich Engels' study of the peasant war in Germany in 1525, that also celebrated its outstanding leader Thomas Muenzer. Such a recall becomes necessary for another reason.

There is an impression among many that while the idea of a worker-peasant alliance was advanced by Lenin and taken up subsequently by Mao and other third world Communist revolutionaries, both Marx and Engels had been sceptical about the potential role of the peasants as an ally of the proletariat in the transition to socialism. The selective quotation of stray remarks of Marx, torn out of context, has also contributed towards confirmation of this impression.

The anarchists have been particularly severe on Marxism on this score. Bakunin had accused the German Communists of viewing all peasants as elements of reaction and added: "The fact is that the Marxists cannot think otherwise; worshippers of state power at any price, they are bound to curse every people's revolution, especially a peasant revolution, which is anarchic by its very nature, and which proceeds directly to annihilate the state."

This impression about Marx and Engels however is entirely erroneous. It was Ferdinand Lassalle the German working class leader who had called the sixteenth century peasant uprising in Germany "reactionary" in "substance and principle", despite its "revolutionary appearance". Here, as in other spheres, such as the so-called "Iron Law of Wages" propounded by Lassalle (that wages under capitalism can never rise

above a certain physical subsistence level), Lassalle's views were erroneously identified as those of Marx and Engels. In fact, Engels' study of the sixteenth century peasant uprising in Germany was meant precisely to counter this tendency within the German Left, shared even by leaders like Wilhelm Liebknecht, to see the peasants as a reactionary mass with whom the working class could have no alliance.

Engels by contrast not only advocated a worker-peasant alliance for the coming German Revolution, but suggested that the 1525 peasant uprising had failed because it had been a series of local events with little national coordination among these events (Germany at that time had not been a single unified country), and also because the peasants had failed to have alliances even at the local level with the plebeian urban masses (who constituted a proto-



proletarian class). In fact, they were able to put up a much stronger resistance in those regions where they could have an alliance with the plebeian masses such as in Thuringia where Thomas Muenzer had been active.

The Peasant War in Germany had been written in 1850, in the shadow of the defeat of 1848 revolution all over Europe. In 1870 Engels wrote a Preface to a new edition of the book where he drew a parallel between the 1525 and 1848 revolutions and further elaborated his argument for a worker-peasant alliance.

In the 1870 Preface, he suggested that the German bourgeoisie had arrived too late on the scene, at a time when bourgeois development elsewhere in Europe had simultaneously developed the proletariat to such a great extent that the bourgeoisie even in those countries was politically on the retreat, having to buttress its position by building bridges with other conservative, anti-working class elements; in France, for instance, the bourgeoisie even had to accept the rule of Louise Bonaparte. In Germany where the bourgeoisie had not even made any "advance" towards political power for it to make a "retreat", it had to have an alliance with the feudal lords from the very outset, to forge a united front for the defence of private property, both bourgeois and feudal property.

In this process, the bourgeoisie necessarily betrayed the interests of the peasantry which could be served only by the proletariat coming to power, by forming a worker-peasant alliance. Such an alliance could be forged and would actually enable the proletariat to come to power because of the combined numerical strength of the allies. A worker-peasant alliance was thus historically both necessary and also possible, for taking on the bourgeois-landlord alliance.

Engels listed out which segments of the population, in the concrete conditions of late-nineteenth-century Germany, could constitute allies of the proletariat. These were: the petty

bourgeoisie, the low-grade proletariat of the cities, the small peasants, and the wage-workers of the land. Within the rural population, this list includes only two classes: the small peasants (Engels uses the terms large, middle and small, rather than rich, middle and poor, to describe the various peasant classes), and the agricultural labourers (or what he calls wage workers on the land). He explains his argument as follows:

"The small peasants (bigger peasants belong to the bourgeoisie) are not homogeneous. They are either in serfdom bound to their lords and masters and in as much as the bourgeoisie has failed to do its duty in freeing those people from serfdom, it will not be difficult to convince them that salvation, for them, can be expected only from the working class; or they are tenants, whose situation is almost equal to that of the Irish. Rents are so high that even in times of normal crops the peasant and his family can hardly eke out a bare existence; when the crops are bad, he virtually starves. When he is unable to pay his rent, he is entirely at the mercy of the landlord. The bourgeoisie thinks of relief only under compulsion. Where, then, should the tenants look for relief outside of the workers?"

"There is another group of peasants, those who own a small piece of land. In most cases, they are so burdened with mortgages that their dependence upon the usurer is equal to the dependence of the tenant upon the landlord. What they earn is practically a meager wage, which, since good and bad crops alternate, is highly uncertain. These people cannot have the least hope of getting anything out of the bourgeoisie, because it is the bourgeoisie, the capitalist usurers, that squeeze the life-blood out of them. Still, the peasants cling to their property, though in reality, it does not belong to them, but to the usurers. It will be necessary to make it clear to these people that only when a government of the people will have transformed all mortgages into debt to the State, and thereby

lowered the rent, will they be able to free themselves from the usurer. This, however, can be accomplished only by the working class.

“Wherever middle and large land ownership prevails, the wage-workers of the land form the most numerous class. This is the case throughout the entire north and east of Germany, and it is here that the industrial workers of the city find their most numerous and natural allies. In the same way, as the capitalist is opposed to the industrial worker, the large landowner or large tenant is opposed to the wage-workers of the land. The measures that help the one must also help the other. The industrial workers can free themselves only by turning the capital of the bourgeoisie, that is, the raw materials, machines and tools, the foodstuffs necessary for production, into social property, their own property, to be used by them in common. Similarly, the wage-workers of the land can be freed from their hideous misery only when the main object of their work, the land itself, will be withdrawn from the private property of the large peasants and still larger feudal masters, and transformed into social property to be cultivated by an association of land workers on common basis”

Engels is visualizing not a two-stage but a one-stage revolution, a socialist revolution, which means that from the morrow of the revolution all effort is to be towards the development of socialism rather than any initial build-up of capitalism in a period of transition. This is why he excludes not only large peasants but even middle peasants from the list of revolutionary allies. He suggests the nationalisation of land rather than radical land distribution, following the break-up of feudal estates.

Obviously, the precise composition of the worker-peasant alliance and the precise agenda of this alliance, will vary from country to country depending on the concrete conditions. Besides, in today’s context, the peasant question must involve liberation not just from feudal oppression but also from big capital, comprising both domestic corporates and multinational agribusiness. But as Engels and Marx had recognised (the book had appeared initially as articles in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* edited by Marx who obviously shared Engels’ position), an appropriate alliance with the peasantry is an essential condition for the achievement of socialism. □



26th JANUARY KISAN TRACTOR PARADES IN STATES

India has witnessed unprecedented Kisan Tractor Parades across the country not just on the outskirts of Delhi but in almost every state of the country. Thousands of Kisans participated with thousands of tractors and other vehicles like cars, jeeps, motorcycles etc. These parades took place in over 300 districts across the country in which over 5 lakh kisans participated in over 1400 centres. In Bihar this programme took place in 30 centres of 22 districts, Odisha at 25 district centres, Uttar Pradesh 65 centres of 25 districts, Madhya Pradesh 25 centres of 25 districts, Rajasthan 27 centres of 12 districts, Telangana 51 centres of 30 districts, West Bengal 39 centres of 23 districts, Jharkhand at 12 district centres and Andhra Pradesh 137 centres of 13 districts. Parades were also organised in many places of Gujarat, Assam, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Thousands

of farmers from Punjab and Haryana participated in Tractor parades in different parts of the state and at outskirts of Delhi. Dharna was organised at Srinagar on 23 January and at Dehradun on 24-25 January.

KERALA

Sending a strong message against the central government which is trying to sell off the farm sector to corporate forces through the anti-farmer farm laws, people of Kerala came on to the streets in protest, on Republic Day. The protest marches were held all over the state expressing solidarity to the farmers' rally held in Delhi.

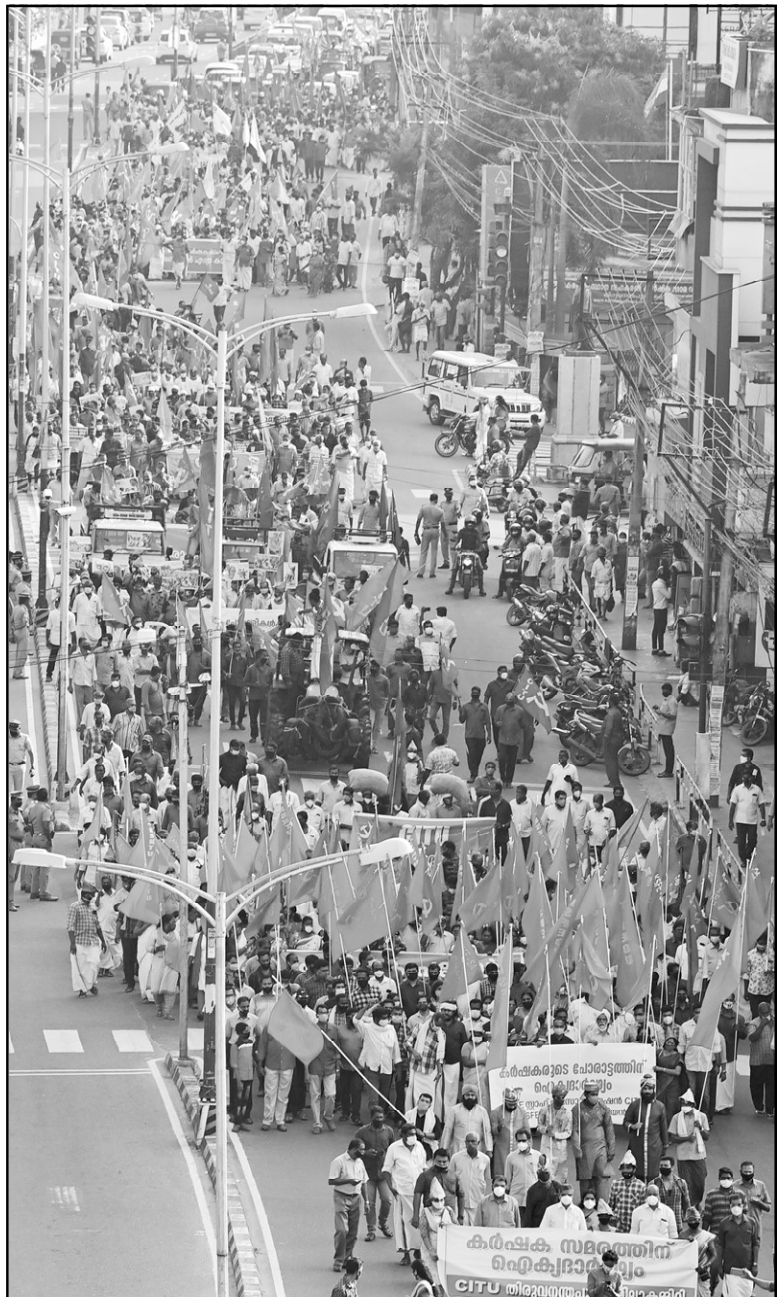
Tractors, bullock carts, farm produces and floats were displayed in these protest rallies organised by the Joint Farmers' Committee. It is



estimated that more than ten lakh people participated in 920 centres across the state. A huge rally was held from SMV High School ground to the martyrs' column in Palayam in Thiruvananthapuram. Inaugurating the rally, AIAWU President A Vijayaraghavan said that the entire farming community would be deprived of land due to the implementation of the new farm laws. The government is brutally pushing ahead with the anti-people laws. Farmers and workers will resist these policies with organised struggles and protests, he said.

WEST BENGAL

AIKS along with other organisations took out mammoth rallies in the state capital and in all the districts to show solidarity with the farmers' Republic Day tractor parade in the national capital. The peasants held rallies with tractors, motorcycles, auto-rickshaws and cars across all 23 districts. The demand to repeal all the three farm laws was made from these rallies. Farmers also walked many kilometres in long processions in solidarity with their comrades at the borders of Delhi. The farmers' jathas travelled across the state with the aim of creating awareness and uniting farmers for a pan India movement.



Way back in December, in a strong show of support to the protesting farmers at the Delhi borders, more than 50,000 farmers came from across West Bengal to Kolkata and blockaded Rani Rashmoni Avenue, a major thoroughfare near Raj Bhavan, for more than four hours. Two massive processions, one from Sealdah railway station and the other from Howrah railway station, crisscrossed major parts of the city and congregated at the heart of the city, Esplanade, near the Raj Bhavan. The activists of SFI, DYFI

and CITU together led a huge rally to the venue. They were joined by the Eastern Railway Men's Union and the BSNL workers' union.

Earlier this month, a 72 hour long farmers' dharna took place at the busy Esplanade area in Kolkata. In this dharna, farmer leaders from West Bengal extended their support and solidarity to the farmers protesting at the borders of Delhi, against the three farm laws that were thrust upon them without consulting them.

Scores of comrades representing AIKS, SFI, DYFI and AIDWA kept night long vigil in the piercing cold of January, singing protest songs and reciting Rabindranath Tagore, Sukanta Bhattacharya, Bertolt Brecht, Safdar Hashmi, Utpal Dutt and the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA).

KARNATAKA

Bengaluru saw one of the largest united kisan rallies this January 26. A central public meeting was held at Freedom Park. Before that, a parade with more than a thousand people was held to the venue from the City Railway Station. It was held under the banner of 'Samyukta Horata Karnataka' - platform of practically all kisan, workers, dalit, student, youth, mahila organisations in Karnataka. U Basavaraj (general secretary of KPRS - AIKS state unit), Nityananda Swamy (president, AIAWU state unit) addressed the public meeting along with other kisan, worker, student, youth, mahila leaders.

Over 500 tractors and thousands of kisans and workers had arrived at Bengaluru borders earlier in the morning from various roads converging from Mysore, Tumkur and Bellary. But the police stopped them at the border. They did not allow tractors into the city. Despite that, a rally with over 10,000 kisans, workers and few tractors participated in the kisan parade.

There are reports of kisan parades with several tractors held in Kalburgi, Dharwad, Hospet and Chikkaballapur. Kisan Republic day parades were held in most districts.

JHARKHAND

On the occasion of Akhil Hind Kisan Diwas on January 23, farmers' rally was organised in Ranchi and Dumka to protest against the unconstitutional and corporate-friendly farm laws and to express solidarity with the ongoing farmers' agitation at various border points of Delhi. The rallies in Jharkhand were organised under the banner of All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee. AIKS, CITU, AIDWA, AARM, DYFI, SFI, Janwadi Lekhak Sangh and BEFI participated in it. Due to enthusiastic

participation of people, the rallies turned into "padav".

In Ranchi, more than 2,500 people gathered outside the Raj Bhawan. Farmers, workers, women, youth, students and writers from different districts assembled at the venue and raised slogans demanding that the Modi government repeal the three farm laws and provide legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP).

The programme started with a two-minute silence in memory of more than 140 farmers who died during the ongoing protest in Delhi. Mithalesh Singh of CITU presided over the event. Prakash Viplav, R P Singh and R K Gorai (CITU); Sufal Mahto, Shyam Sundar Mahto (AIKS); Dayamani Barla (social activist); Prafull Linda (AARM); Suresh Munda (DYFI); Jyoti Matharu (Sikh Federation); Bina Linda (AIDWA), Kumar Satyendra (Janwadi Lekhak Sangh); and Biplav Choudhary (SFI) addressed the gathering.

In Dumka, more than 1,100 people from six districts of the Santhal Parganas division assembled outside the office of the divisional commissioner and raised slogans against the Modi government. Surjeet Sinha, state secretary of AIKS said Dumka is the land of Santhal Hul of 1855. The rebellion started for the rights of the peasant class. If the peasant class is made to suffer again, they will lead another revolt against the current regime. He asked the Modi government to take back these laws immediately. Ehtesham Ahmad and Mantu Oraon of AIKS presided over the event. Other speakers were Md. Iqbal (CITU), Gopin Soren (AIKS), Subhash Hembram (AARM), and Alka Manjhi (AIDWA).

In both places, the speakers also demanded that the Hemant Soren-led government in Jharkhand pass a resolution against these farm laws as has been done by the LDF government in Kerala. A team of more than 50 members from Jharkhand will participate in the ongoing farmers' protest in the national capital next month.

On the occasion of 72nd Republic Day, peasants' parade was organised in different districts of Jharkhand in the forms of tractor

marches, motorcycle rallies and foot marches. In the state capital, under the leadership of AIKS, a rally of more than 100 bikes and three tractors was organised covering more than 6.5 km. The rally culminated at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Morabadi. Participants took oath to safeguard the constitution and read out the preamble.

In Lathehar district, the march was organised with 32 tractors. In Sonahatu, 22 tractors participated in the parade. In Topchanchi, 11 tractors and 100 peasants marched in support of the protesting farmers. In Gumani, 25 motorcycles were part of the parade, while in Koderma 35 motorcycles were in the march. In many places foot marches were organised.

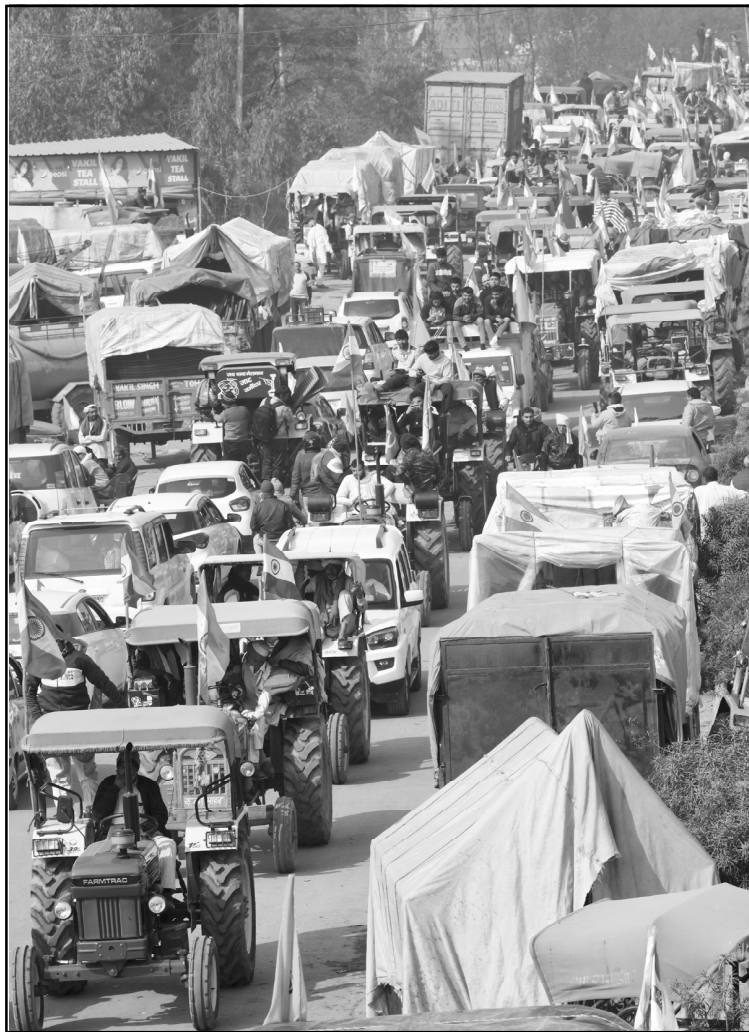
JAMMU & KASHMIR

On January 23, 2021, at a joint call of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU a Mahapadav was held in front of the Raj Bhawan, Panjthirithi, Jammu, against anti-farmer bills passed by the NDA government and demanding legislation guaranteeing MSP. Hundreds of farmers and workers participated.

While addressing the peasants and workers, M Y Tarigami, president of J & K CITU said that the unprecedented nationwide farmers struggle led by Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) is set to greatly intensify as it completes two months on Republic day, January 26, 2021.

Tarigami said the BJP-led central government still remains adamant, and also vindictive. Eleven rounds of talks with the SKM have led to no results so far. Scores of notices were sent last week to several participants in the farmers struggle from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) trying to link them with Khalistani groups. This has enraged the farmers' organisations even more and they are determined to fight back.

Kishore Kumar, president, J & K Kisan



Tehrik (AIKS) said that lakhs of peasants and workers, as well as women, youth, students and sections of the middle class in almost all states will participate in all these countrywide struggles that will squarely target the central government, along with the repeal of the three farm laws and the four labour codes and the withdrawal of the Electricity (Amendment) Bill. These struggles will also echo another cardinal demand of the Delhi struggle for a law mandating MSP at the C2+50 per cent rate and also guarantee of procurement. He said, these farm laws are also against the paddy, vegetable and fruit growers of Jammu & Kashmir. Others who spoke on the occasion were S P Kesar, leader of democratic movement, Om Parkash, general secretary state CITU, Sohan Lal, Sewa Ram and Banarasi Dass leader of J & K Kisan Tehrik. □

MASSIVE MASS ACTIONS IN MAHARASHTRA STRENGTHEN NATIONWIDE FARMERS STRUGGLE

- Dr Ashok Dhawale

From January 23 to 26, massive mass actions took place in Maharashtra to further strengthen the nationwide farmers struggle for the repeal of the three hated Farm Laws and for a law to guarantee MSP and procurement. These politically significant actions were excellently covered by most of the mainstream national and state media, and of course by the social media.

BUILDING UP THE STRUGGLE

From December 21 to 25, 2020, over 1,000 peasants from several districts, led by the AIKS Maharashtra unit, had led a five-day Vehicle March from Nashik to Delhi, which stayed at the Shahjahanpur border for a week. This had been reported in these columns earlier.

With the intensification of the nationwide struggle, there arose a need to greatly broaden and strengthen the struggle in Maharashtra, so as to involve all political and social forces opposed to the BJP government at the centre. The AIKS Maharashtra State Council drew up this strategy in its first post-Covid physical meeting after a year that was held at Belapur, New Mumbai on January 10.

At the initiative of the AIKS, a broad meeting of more than 100 organisations was convened in Mumbai on January 12. Representatives of most of the state level organisations in the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), Trade Unions Joint Action Committee (TUJAC), Struggle Committee of Mass Movements (JASS), Nation for Farmers and Hum Bharat ke Log participated.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The name of the Front spearheading the movement was decided as Samyukta Shetkari Kamgar Morcha - (SSKM Maharashtra) - United Peasant Worker Front.

The action programmes that were decided upon were as follows: January 14-15 - Public burning of Farm Laws and Labour Codes; January

18 - Women Farmers Day; January 23 - Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Birth Anniversary - Farmers to leave from their respective districts in vehicles and come to Mumbai for the massive MahaPadav; January 24-26 - Farmers to conduct MahaPadav at Azad Maidan, Mumbai; January 25 - Mass Rally to Raj Bhawan; January 26 - Republic Day hoisting of the national flag at Azad Maidan. An SSKM press conference was held in Mumbai on January 15 and again on January 21 to announce this programme.

On January 14-15, thousands of working people in Maharashtra made bonfires of the Farm Acts and Labour Codes. On January 18, the Mahila Kisan Day was observed widely all over the state, with thousands of women and men taking part in innumerable actions. The AIDWA played an important role in mobilising women across the state.

MAIN DEMANDS

The main demands of this struggle are: Repeal the three Farm Acts and four Labour Codes; Enact a central law to guarantee a remunerative MSP and procurement; Withdraw the Electricity Amendment Bill; Give regular pension from the Centre to farmers and agricultural workers; Withdraw the anti-people New Education Policy.

Some issues are also related to the state government. They are: Implement the Mahatma Phule Loan Waiver Scheme; Implement the Forest Rights Act and vest forest lands in the name of the tillers; Vest temple lands, pasture lands etc in the name of the tillers; Repeal the 2018 Land Acquisition Act enacted by the previous BJP state government and restore the earlier 2014 Act.

On January 14, the SSKM committee met former Union Agriculture Minister, former chief minister and NCP chief Sharad Pawar, chief minister and Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, state revenue minister and Congress state chief Balasaheb Thorat and requested them to support

this struggle on behalf of the Maha Vikas Aghadi. All of them assured full support to the struggle. Sharad Pawar and Balasaheb Thorat agreed to address the state convention at Azad Maidan. Uddhav Thackeray agreed to send a Shiv Sena representative to the convention.



The SSKM delegation requested the above leaders to convene a special session of the state assembly to deal with the agrarian crisis and related issues; to adopt a state assembly resolution asking the Centre to repeal the three Farm Acts and the four Labour Codes; and to enact an Act for ensuring MSP and other demands.

AIKS VEHICLE MARCH TO MUMBAI

All India Kisan Sabha's (AIKS) Maharashtra unit began a statewide Vehicle March of 15,000 farmers hailing from 21 districts of the state, from Nashik to Mumbai on January 23 on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The March began from the Golf Club Maidan in Nashik in hundreds of tempos, pick-ups and other vehicles. A large public meeting held before the march began was addressed by leaders of all mass fronts.

On the night of January 23, the marchers halted for the night at Ghatandevi near Igatpuri. On the morning of January 24 they began their march on foot down the 8 Km long Kasara Ghat joining Nashik and Thane districts. Comprising a large number of women farmers and youth farmers, the three hour march began at 9 am and ended at 12 noon. The peasants were followed down the Kasara Ghat by hundreds of their vehicles.

The Kasara Ghat march and the Vehicle Jatha was led by AIKS national president Dr Ashok Dhawale, state president Kisan Gujar, state general secretary Dr Ajit Nawale, state office bearers Sunil Malusare, Barkya Mangat, Ratan

Budhar, Radka Kalangda, Savliram Pawar, Subhash Choudhary, Dada Raipure, Arjun Adey, Shankar Sidam, Uddhav Poul, Umesh Deshmukh, Uday Narkar, Manik Avaghade, CITU state secretary and CPI(M) MLA Vinod Nikole, AIDWA national general secretary Mariam Dhawale and state general secretary Prachi Hatiwlekar, AIAWU state president Maroti Khandare, DYFI state general secretary Preethy Sekhar, SFI state president Balaji Kaletwad and state general secretary Rohidas Jadhav, and many other AIKS state council leaders.

The Vehicle Jatha then proceeded towards Mumbai. On the way, hundreds of CITU-affiliated factory workers from Igatpuri and Shahapur tehsils warmly welcomed their peasant compatriots by showering them with flowers.

At the Kalyan-Bhiwandi crossroad, the CPI(M), CITU and DYFI led by P K Lali, Sunil Chavan, Parveen Khan and Jyoti Tayde, and the Amrut Vela Gurudwara welcomed and provided thousands of food packets to all the Kisan marchers.

The Jatha crossed Mumbai at the Mulund Check Naka in the afternoon and was warmly welcomed at the Kannamwar Nagar at Vikhroli by hundreds of activists of the CPI(M), CITU, DYFI and AIDWA in Mumbai, led by Party CCM Mahendra Singh and Hemkant Samant.

It then proceeded to the Azad Maidan, where it was resoundingly welcomed at the joint sit-in struggle at Azad Maidan organised by the SSKM from morning.

Massive Joint Convention in Mumbai

On January 25, on the eve of Republic Day,

a massive joint statewide convention of around 40,000 peasants, workers and all other working sections was organised by the SSKM at the famous Azad Maidan in the heart of Mumbai. It included thousands of women and youth. This was on the second day of the Mahapadav that began on January 24.

The political significance of this convention was that it was the first time after many years in Maharashtra that all political and social forces opposed to the BJP came together on one platform.

The main speakers were former union minister and NCP chief Sharad Pawar, Congress state chief and state revenue minister Balasaheb Thorat, AIKS national general secretary Hannan Mollah, PWP general secretary Jayant Patil, MLC, AIKS national president Dr Ashok Dhawale, renowned journalist P Sainath, anti-communal fighter Teesta Setalvad, Shiv Sena leader Rahul Londhe, CPI(M) state secretary Narasayya Adam, Samajwadi Party leader Abu Asim Azmi, MLA, CPI state secretary Tukaram Bhasme, AAP secretary Dhananjay Shinde, RPI (Kawade) leader Ganesh Unhavne, AIDWA national general secretary Mariam Dhawale, AIKS state general secretary Dr Ajit Nawale, CITU state vice president Dr Vivek Monteiro, NAPM leader Medha Patkar, former Mumbai High Court Justice B G Kolse Patil, Hum Bharat ke Log leader Feroze Mithiborwala, MFUCTO president Tapati Mukhopadhyay, NCP leader Vidya Chavan, ex-MLA, Congress Mumbai chief Bhai Jagtap, MLA, Sarvahara Jan Andolan leader Ulka Mahajan, Kashtakari Sanghatana leader Brian Lobo, Satyashodhak Shetkari Sabha leader Kishor Dhamale and many others. The presidium comprised Raju Korde, S K Rege, Milind Ranade and Shailendra Kamble.

Sharad Pawar was outspoken in his criticism of the BJP regime and of the three Farm Laws, insisted on an MSP guarantee law and warned that if the central government tried to destroy farmers, they would destroy it instead.

Balasaheb Thorat also attacked the Modi government on the Farm Laws and said that the state government was seriously thinking of bringing in legislation to annul their effects and protect farmers.

Hannan Mollah gave the experience of the

two month long historic farmers struggle around Delhi and exposed the sheer bankruptcy and insensitivity of the Modi regime while dealing with it.

P Sainath stressed on the fact that these Farm Laws attacked not only farmers, but all sections of the people and gave several examples to prove this point.

Ashok Dhawale attacked the pro-corporate and neo-liberal character of the Farm Laws and the Labour Codes and accused the Modi regime of trying to sell off the country. Now it was targeting our agriculture and our land.

All the speakers flayed the Modi government for its pro-corporate Farm Laws and Labour Codes and came down heavily on the BJP govt's crony capitalist connection with the Ambanis and Adanis. Many leaders called for intensifying the boycott of their products and services. They also demanded a law guaranteeing a remunerative MSP and procurement.

GOVERNOR ABSENT, FARMERS TEAR MEMORANDUM

After the convention, a huge rally began for the Raj Bhawan. On learning that Governor Koshiyari, in spite of having given an appointment to the SSKM delegation, had fled away to Goa, the people got angry. After an immediate SSKM meeting, Dr Ashok Dhawale announced its unanimous decision to cancel the delegation to the Governor and to publicly tear up the memorandum prepared for him. The public meeting then dispersed amidst great enthusiasm with the resolve to broaden and intensify the struggle manifold against the Farm Laws and the Labour Codes and for an MSP law.

On the morning of January 26, the national flag was hoisted at the Azad Maidan by Yamunabai Jadhav, a 73 year old Adivasi woman from Nashik district, who had herself walked the entire 200 Km stretch of the AIKS-led Kisan Long March from Nashik to Mumbai two years ago. The Speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly, Nana Patole specially remained present for the flag hoisting, along with SSKM leaders.

The January 23-26 actions in Maharashtra had a wide impact in the state and also across the country. □

PUNJAB: FARMERS' MOVEMENT AGAINST AGRICULTURAL LAWS

- Balwinder Singh Tiwana

The government of India passed Farm Ordinances on June 5, 2020, regarding agricultural reforms and then passed the Acts in September in the Parliament on September 22, 2020. Questions are also being raised about the legality of these laws as agricultural production comes under the preview the state governments according to State List of the Indian Constitution. The movement against these laws had started in Punjab since June 2020.

As a result of the Green Revolution, there have been drastic changes in the cropping pattern of Punjab. Presently there is monocropping in Punjab with a rotation of paddy and wheat as only these crops are being assuredly purchased in APMC at MSP. The market structure and network of roads for APMC have been well developed during the last five decades. Presently there is a good market structure in Punjab. These three laws not even posed the danger to this structure rather it will create the conditions for the dismantling of the MSP itself.

There is a potential threat to the ownership of land as about 67 per cent farmers are cultivating less than 10 acres of land in Punjab.

Immediately after the passing of these three Ordinances in June, leader of farmers' organisations and pro-people intellectuals initiated some dialogue/conversation regarding the devastating effects of these Ordinances on farmers and people of Punjab. Slowly various organisations of farmers organised meetings of farmers to make them aware regarding anti-farmer provisions of these Ordinances. Some protests were held during the month of July 2020. Farmers burnt effigies of BJP-SAD on July 20, in a large number of

villages of Punjab. Then on July 27, 2020, there was impressive 'tractor march' and a memorandum was submitted to the concerned members of Parliament of the area. The tractor has emerged as a symbol of protest by farmers against three black agricultural Ordinances. Slowly with the advancement of agitation, the participation of youth and women increased.

On August 19, 2020, all 31 organisations of farmers decided to work together and unitedly. All 31 farmers' organisations of Punjab decided is work in coordination with AIKSCC.

Some organisations even banned the entry of BJP and Shiromani Akal Dal(SAD) leaders in the villages of Punjab in the month of August. Jail Bhara call was given from September 7-10. The government of Punjab started filing criminal cases against farmers for violating Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code and guidelines of Covid-19. Strong protests were held in Pipli and Karnal in Haryana in the second week of September where the police lathi-charged the protesting farmers. Punjab farmers protested against this lathi-charge on September 11. Under the pressure of increasing anger and struggle of farmers on September 16, the chief minister of Punjab announced to withdraw all FIRs filed against protesting farmers.

Farmers' organisations of Punjab called for Punjab Bandh on September 25 and to block all roads and rail networks. But the Modi government presented the three farmers related ordinances as Bills in the Indian Parliament on September 14 and on this day all the 31 farmers' organisations called for 'lalkar rallies' and these were very successful at Patiala, Phagwara, Barnala, Amritsar and

Moga. In these rallies, farmers called upon the SAD to clarify its stand. Then SAD came out of union ministry and started speaking against these laws and Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from union cabinet on September 17.

In Punjab, the farmers' organisations started *rail roko* from October 1, 2020. And after this, the farmers started a boycott of Reliance petrol pumps, malls and picketing at toll plazas. A large number of toll plazas were opened without any charge to the people and slowly all toll plazas of Punjab were made access free and the farmers started 24-hour dharna at these toll plazas and Reliance petrol pumps.

The '*rail roko*' protest continued and then on October 21, 2020, the central government itself stopped the trains up to November 23. The kisans participated in large numbers on the AIKSCC call for '*chakka jam*' (roadblock) on November 5 and 'Delhi chalo' on 26-27 of November 26-27, 2020.

After this call by AIKSCC (now called *Samyukta Kisan Morcha*) the Modi government held regular meetings with farmers' organisations of Punjab on November 13 in which railway minister, Piyush Goyal and minister of agriculture and farmers welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar and minister of state for commerce and industry, Som Nath was present.

Then the farmers of Punjab started moving towards Delhi on November 24-25 on the call of SKM. But on November 26, thousands of Punjab farmers broke the barricades at the borders of Haryana (at Sambhu, Khanori and Mandi Dabhwali) and moved towards Delhi. In this struggle to reach Delhi, the farmers of Haryana helped in a big way to the Punjab farmers. Then the farmers started morcha (blockade) at Singhu and Tikri borders from November 27, 2020, onwards.

The farmers' organisations have failed all the schemes and ill wills of the Modi government. With thousands of tractors-trolleys, buses, cars etc., lakhs of farmers sat

at the borders of Delhi. Artists, employees, workers, students, intellectuals and other sections of people started to come to Delhi in support of the farmers. Even the NRIs provided support to these struggling farmers. Large number of women and children are also fully participating in these *morchas*.

The farmers at these borders have established as newly inhabited villages/cities/towns. Lakhs of people are there at Singhu and Tikri. There are about 12,500 villages in Punjab and farmers from every village are at these borders of Delhi. Now from the beginning of December farmers of other states are also coming to Delhi.

In the midst of meetings with the leadership of the farmers with the government, thousands of farmers with tractor-trolleys and other vehicles have come to Delhi after braking barricades from Utrakhand, UP, MP, Maharashtra, Rajasthan etc. They have blocked the national highways at Hazipur, Shahjahanpur and Palwal.

Protest actions continued in the background of the continuous meeting with the government. The people burnt copies of farm laws on Lohri in all the villages of Punjab on January 13 and January 18, 2021, was celebrated as Mahila Kisan Diwas on the call of KSM.

Lakhs of farmers, workers, women, children, elderly and many other sections of the people are there on roads in this extreme cold. Till date, more than 103 persons have sacrificed their lives in this struggle, but the Modi government is not sensitive towards the demands of farmers. Farmers have already chalked out the protest actions up to January 26.

For January 26, a '*tractor parade*' in Delhi with large scale mobilisation of the people is underway by all the organisations. In some villages, it is decided unanimously that at least one person from every family will participate in this parade and those who are unable to participate they will contribute financially.



During this movement, a large number of university, college and school students participated in the Delhi *morcha*. A large number of cultural troupes have emerged/formed by the students and youth. For this mobilization of January 26, these troupes are actively helping the organisations. The awareness level of common Punjabis has risen and they are awakening about the danger of corporate loot of Punjab and India. New narratives are coming to the fore which are very steep for the Punjabis to understand the situation.

The three organisations, AIKS, AIAWA and CITU of Punjab held a joint meeting on January 18, 2021, at Ludhiana to make the action of January 26 successful. It has decided to mobilise the people in large numbers with tractors from all the districts of Punjab. Some districts already held the meeting for this

purpose and many are going to hold the meetings from January 20-23. All the farmers' organisation are making all efforts and due to this lakhs of farmers, workers, women and children of Punjab will be part of January 26, 2021 parade being organised by SKM.

One thing is very clear, that this is a totally different type of movement by the farmers. After independence of India this is the first movement in which all the farmers' organisations (more than 500 at the national level and 31 at Punjab level) are participating and all sections, except corporates, are part of this peoples' movement and almost all parties except BJP and NDA allies are supporting. Presently this has become an international movement. Farmers will not go back without repeal of these three anti-farmer Acts. □

TELANGANA: BUS JATHA TO EDUCATE FARMERS AND PEOPLE

- T Sagar

Demanding repeal of three farm laws, and withdrawal of proposed 2003 Electricity (Amendment) Bill, the Telangana Rythu Sangham (Farmers Association) is organising a bus jatha in Telangana from January 1st to February 1, 2021. From November 26th, lakhs of farmers and people are agitating in Delhi demanding the repeal of farm laws. In support of farmers agitation, the Telangana Rythu Sangham, to educate farmers and people and to explain the dangers of the farm laws, has started the bus jatha.

In the inaugural meeting of bus jatha at Sangareddy, T Sagar, general secretary of Telangana Rythu Sangham, Julakanti Rangareddy, ex-MLA, Chukka Ramulu, state CITU president and others participated. An amount of three lakh rupees financial assistance was given from the working class for the success of jatha. The inaugural programme happened with lot of enthusiasm. One lakh leaflets, 25 thousand booklets were used in the campaign. Covering villages and towns, the campaign is conducted every day, in seven to eight villages. Meals are being provided to those participating in the jatha. Local farmer leaders, along with other political party leaders are speaking in the meetings. Already the jatha covered nine districts and 120 villages. People who are coming to participate in the meetings and protests are expressing resentment towards central government. Locally also, tractor rallies, motor cycle rallies are being conducted in support of the jatha.

In Hyderabad, on December 30, a big public meeting took place with large number of farmers.

The farmers not able to get MSP for their products and are getting indebted and in the process are losing land. The farmers in

Telangana are worried that this will also happen to them also. Already the MSP is not being implemented in the markets. Even though market committee security is there, MSP is not being obtained and the farmers are incurring a loss. In the past Contract Act was brought. Since the Act was not properly implemented the seed breeding farmers became bankrupt. But the seed companies profited. With the amendment of the Essential Commodities Act, the daily used commodities prices rose 50 to 100 per cent. In these three months of implementation of farm laws, only the farmers are facing loss. After purchasing the products from farmers, the middlemen processing units and corporates are making huge profit worth thousands of crore rupees. The exploitation of farmers from corporates is directly visible.

If the proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill is implemented, the free electricity being given to farmers, cross-subsidy given to poor, subsidies being given to DISCOMS by state governments will be abolished. For example, in Telangana, out of 1.6 crore connections, approximately 80 lakhs connections are getting concession. After losing the subsidy the consumers will be distanced from using electricity. So, the 2003 Electricity (Amendment) Bill should not be introduced in the parliament, so the farmers' unions are demanding and agitating.

In bus jatha this aspect is also included and is being campaigned. The bus jatha will cover all 31 districts up to February 1, and will end in Hyderabad with a big demonstration. On January 26, farmers parade will take place in every district and Hyderabad. There is no doubt that the bus jatha will enthuse all these aspects.

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