

# PEASANTS' STRUGGLE

MAY-JUNE 2023

*Opening of AIKS 35th All India Conference, Thrissur, Kerala*



*Mazdoor-Kisan Sangharsh Rally, Delhi*





Kerala CM Comrade Pinarayi Vijayan addressing the rally on the culmination of AIKS 35<sup>th</sup> Conference



Proclamation procession of AIKS 35<sup>th</sup> All India Conference



Women delegates in AIKS 35<sup>th</sup> All India Conference

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# FOREWORD

The 35th All India Conference of the All India Kisan Sabha was held in Thrissur, Kerala, in which we pledged to “Struggle, Consolidate, Advance for an Alternative”. This is the period when the most pro-corporate, communal and authoritarian government since independence is in power. Next year we will face the parliamentary election which is a chance for the people to overthrow this fascistic regime. We have seen the peasantry of the country force this government to bow down two times: first, when it brought the land acquisition ordinance and second, when it forcibly tried to implement the hated farm laws.

Along with AIKS, CITU and AIAWU, the other two working class organisations, have also held their All India Conferences recently in the months of January and February at Bengaluru and Howrah respectively. These three class organisations gave the call of strengthening working class struggles on the issues of livelihood. The Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally in Delhi on 5<sup>th</sup> April was a milestone in the series of resistance actions against this government. Over a lakh workers and peasants participated in this rally from every corner of the country to challenge the anti-worker, anti-peasant, anti-people, pro-corporate policies of the Narendra Modi-led BJP-RSS Union Government.

The united movement of the Indian peasantry under the banner of SKM, which made the Modi regime surrender after a historic year-long struggle which led to the martyrdom of over 715 farmers, is also starting its second phase of struggle after the betrayal by the government that has failed to fulfil the assurances made to the peasants. On the 75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day, Kisan parades were organised in different parts of the country and a huge rally was held at Jind in Haryana. The Kisan Mahapanchayat held on 20th March at Delhi’s Ramlila Maidan vowed to launch a bigger movement than last time.

Now it is clear that India is in a phase of undeclared emergency where every voice of dissent is crushed. The Modi led BJP-RSS government has tremendous control over the media houses through their crony corporate friends like Adani and Ambani. They are setting an agenda of communal politics rather than focussing on the issues of the people of India. The BJP Government protected Adani even after the Hindenburg report was out, which clearly showed how the Adani-Modi nexus looted the money of small investors and the public sector. PM Modi himself did not speak a single word regarding this issue in Parliament and BJP opposed the demand of the opposition to constitute a JPC on this issue.

Advancing further in authoritarian measures, the Modi regime has started sending elected representatives from the opposition to jail by manipulating the law. India is witnessing the fascistic regime flaunting its true colours by dismantling the ethos of democracy and by hunting down the voices of dissent across the country using governmental agencies. It is the need of the hour to build a people’s movement to protect the peoples’ livelihood, democracy, secularism, and the Constitution.

This issue of Peasants Struggle contains articles and reports on recent issues and struggles across India. We hope that this issue will inspire peasants across the country to carry forward their struggles with even greater strength and vigour, in order to defeat the Modi-led BJP-RSS regime, and advance towards a pro-people alternative. □

# STRUGGLE, CONSOLIDATE, ADVANCE FOR AN ALTERNATIVE: CLARION CALL OF 35<sup>th</sup> ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF AIKS

- Vijoo Krishnan



The 35th All India Conference of All India Kisan Sabha that started on 13<sup>th</sup> December concluded at Thrissur, the cultural capital of Kerala, on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, on an inspiring note with a massive rally and public meeting inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Kerala Com. Pinarayi Vijayan. Addressing the massive gathering he emphasised the need to resist and defeat the communal fascist forces and the neoliberal economic policies that are facilitating corporate profiteering at the expense of the people. He also contrasted the Communal-Corporate Model with the pro-people Kerala Alternative being implemented by the Left democratic Front Government.

The newly re-elected President of AIKS Dr. Ashok Dhawale and newly elected General Secretary Dr Vijoo Krishnan, Hannan Mollah, Vice-President, AIKS, A. Vijayaraghavan, President of AIIAWU and others addressed the masses. Thousands marched holding high red flags and raising slogans and reached the venue of the public meeting named Com. Kodiyeri

Balakrishnan Nagar (Thekkinkatt Maidan). Thousands were already assembled as the songs by the Praja Natya Mandali from Telangana filled the air with revolutionary fervour.

All through the last few months numerous programmes were held in the run-up to the Conference. One unmistakable imprint witnessed throughout was to draw inspiration from the revolutionary anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggles of the past, Telangana, Tebhaga, Kayyur, Punnapra Vayalar, Warli, Surma Valley, Adivasi struggles, Keezhvenmani, Salem Jail and the numerous other struggles, draw lessons from the historic united kisan struggle that emerged victorious, consolidate organisationally and expand to realise the slogan *Kisan Sabha in Every Village, Every Kisan in Kisan Sabha* and on the basis of a strong unity of the working class and the peasantry to advance for an alternative.

The Conference deliberated at length on the Report presented by the General Secretary,

Hannan Mollah. There were in all 65 speakers from 26 States who took part in the discussion on the Report; the discussion being held in two parts, one on political, agrarian scenario and movements; the other on organisation. Altogether 800 delegates, the members of the Central Kisan Committee, observers and fraternal delegates attended the Conference. Delegates brought to light the burning issues faced by the peasantry in their States, the organisational status, movements and efforts to strengthen the organisation. The Conference called for massive independent and united struggles against the BJP Government, Neoliberal Economic Policies, Communal and Fascist forces that threaten Indian masses backed by strong and effective political-ideological campaigns, and a determined drive to strengthen the organisation. The Conference called for united movement with the CITU and the AIAWU and Parliament March on 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 as decided in the Mazdoor-Kisan Mahadhivshan on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2022. It decided to hold joint Conventions in all states, padayatras and campaigns with the aim of mobilising lakhs of workers and peasants. For the first time ever about 20 fraternal delegates from AIAWU, CITU, AIDWA, DSMM, AARM

attended the Conference in a move emphasising the need for the broadest unity of class and mass organisations.

In a shocking case of intervention by the BJP Government fraternal delegates from Trade Union International in Agriculture affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions were denied permission to attend the Conference and were returned back from Kochi Airport citing Visa violations. The All India Conference condemned this move by the Ministry of External Affairs and passed a Resolution against this retrograde, undemocratic move violating all norms. Notably, a Fraternal delegate from Iran for the Conference of All India Trade Union Congress was also similarly sent back the very next day. This kind of blatant intervention in democratic functioning of organisations is unacceptable.

On 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 an important Seminar was held on the topic **Agrarian Crisis, Peasant Struggle and Alternatives**, addressed by Prof. Prabhat Patnaik, Prof. Jagmohan, nephew of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Prakash Karat, A. Vijayaraghavan and presided over by Ashok Dhawale. The Conference passed Resolutions on different important



issues: Legal Guarantee of Minimum Support Prices, Debt Relief, Crop Insurance, Labour Codes, Food Security and Strengthening PDS, Rights of Women Farmers and Agricultural Workers, Against Dilution of MGNREGA, Human-Wildlife Conflict, Implementation of the Forest Rights Act and Against Dilution of Forest Rights, Climate Change and Peasantry in India, on Sugarcane Farmers and Against Implementation of the Recommendations of the Rangarajan Committee and for Remunerative Prices, On Problems of Dairy Farmers, Against Sale of Resources in the Name of National Monetization Pipeline, On the Crisis in the Fertilizer Sector, Against the

Electricity (Amendment) Bill and on Problems Faced by Apple Farmers.

There were three Commissions which had resource persons presenting detailed papers on three important topics that concern the peasantry in India. Prof.Surajit Mazumdar was the Convenor of the Commission on **Finance Capital and the Corporate Penetration of Indian** Agriculture. Prof.Vikas Rawal was the Convenor of the Commission on **Statutory Guarantee of Minimum Support Prices** and Prof.Ramakumar was the Convenor of the Commission on **Emerging Issues in Land Policy in Rural India**. The entire delegation was divided into three parts; N.K.Shukla, Badal



Saroj, Biplab Majumdar chaired the Sessions respectively. After deliberations for about 4 hours the Convenors presented the details in a plenary session. These documents will be finalised by the Central Kisan Committee and act as guiding documents for the AIKS.

The Conference was greeted by AIAWU President A Vijayaraghavan, CITU President K. Hemalata, AIDWA General Secretary Mariam Dhawale, NPRD Convenor Muralidharan, Delli Babu from Adivasi Adhikar Rashtriya Manch and Samuel Raj from Dalit Shoshan Mukti Manch. The main thrust in their address was for united, coordinated efforts to resist the anti-people policies of the BJP Government and defeat efforts of the communal fascist

forces to divide the country, undermine the Constitution, secular principles and democratic rights.

A Special Session on **United Farmers' Movement** was held in which leaders of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) Rakesh Tikait, Atul Kumar Anjaan and Rajaram Singh were felicitated. They emphasised the need for unity and launching a more intensified second phase of struggle. Darshan Pal and Joginder Singh Ugrahan who could not attend the Conference due to health and unforeseen circumstances also conveyed their greetings. This Special Session drew an enthusiastic response from the delegates and strengthened the resolve for intensifying united struggles.



A special performance of the Veera Telangana by the Praja Natya Mandali and dances, songs and fusion music in between sessions were also a huge draw. A book on the historic farmers' struggles with articles written by different leaders and participants in the struggle titled *Farmers' Movement: A Tale for Times to Come* by the P.Sundarayya Memorial Trust was released by Hannan Mollah by handing over a copy to renowned economist Prof. Venkatesh Athreya. The **Conference Souvenir** comprising several articles from leaders was released by E P Jayarajan by giving a copy to Dr Ashok Dhawale.

The Conference re-emphasised its slogan **Struggle Consolidate, Advance for an Alternative** and decided to intensify united struggles, further strengthen the organisation and on the basis of organisational consolidation as well as strong worker-peasant unity to advance for an alternative.

The Credentials Report placed by Pabitra Kar showed that 27 per cent of the delegates were below 50 years and 48 per cent between the age 51-65 years. In all 334 delegates belonged to agricultural worker or poor peasant background and 280 belonged to the middle peasantry which together constituted 81 per cent of the delegation. Participation from oppressed social classes was the

maximum at 498 or 57 per cent of all delegates. Oldest delegate was Com. S. Malla Reddy aged 85 years and the youngest delegates were Shubhojeet Dey and Gurusewak Singh aged 25 years.

The Conference unanimously elected a 149 member AIKC and a 77 member CKC with 21 office bearers as follows: Dr. Ashok Dhawale as President; Dr. Vijoo Krishnan as General Secretary; P. Krishnaprasad as Finance Secretary; Hannan Mollah, Amra Ram, E P Jayarajan, S K Preeja, Amal Haldar, Biplav Majumdar, P Shanmugham, M Vijayakumar, Inderjit Singh as Vice Presidents; and Badal Saroj, Valsan Panoli, Pabitra Kar, Mukut Singh, T Sagar, D Raveendran, Dr Ajit Nawale, Awadhesh Kumar and Vinod Kumar as Joint Secretaries.

The newly re-elected President Dr. Ashok Dhawale briefly addressed the Conference, laid down the immediate future tasks after this Conference, and thanked the Organising Committee and Kerala Karshaka Sangham for the excellent arrangements that facilitated the success of the Conference. The newly elected General Secretary Dr. Vijoo Krishnan called for building united struggles that will sow fear in the minds of the class enemies and hope in the minds of the friends of the people. The Delegate Session of the Conference concluded with slogans resounding in the air. □



# MASSIVE NATIONWIDE MAZDOOR KISAN SANGHARSH RALLY IN DELHI

- Ashok Dhawale



It was a massive show of strength by the working people of India. Tens of thousands of workers, peasants, agricultural workers and service sector employees from more than 25 states across the country converged on the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on 5 April 2023.

It was a remarkable manifestation of worker peasant unity in action against the Modi-led BJP-RSS regime - its neo-liberal, pro-corporate, and anti-people policies on the one hand, and its communal, casteist, Manuwadi, authoritarian and fascistic attacks on the other.

## **CALL OF THE NATIONAL CONVENTION**

This Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally was jointly organised by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWU), which represent three major sections of the working people who produce the wealth of the country. The clarion call for this rally had been given seven months earlier,

by the huge Mazdoor Kisan National Convention at the Talkatora Stadium in Delhi on 5 September 2022.

An extensive and intensive nationwide campaign was taken to the people by all three organisations for a few months. The central and state leadership of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU in almost all the states met several times to plan, monitor and intensify the joint campaign. Talking points on the main issues for the activists were prepared and sent to the state committees. Joint conventions were held at the state and district levels and in some states at the block, mandal and panchayat levels as well. Crores of joint leaflets were distributed. Joint jathas and padayatras, house to house campaigns were held to meet the people and explain the demands and issues raised by the rally.

## **LEGACY OF UNITED ACTIONS**

Five years ago, on 5 September 2018, another huge Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally

was organised jointly by the CITU, AIKS and AIAWU, from the Ramlila Maidan to Parliament Street in Delhi.

A month before that, on the anniversary of Quit India Day, 9 August 2018, over 5.5 lakh working people from all over the country had courted arrest in a massive Jail Bhara stir at the district, tehsil, and mandal levels. After that, even during the Covid pandemic, 9 August had been observed through large worker-peasant demonstrations throughout the country.

The 5 April 2023 Delhi Rally was held against the background of two mass struggles. The first was, of course, the historic 380-day siege from 26 November 2020 to 11 December 2021, of the nation's capital Delhi by lakhs of farmers from 500-odd farmers' organisations brought together under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM). In this struggle over 715 farmer martyrs sacrificed their lives. But it succeeded in defeating the Modi government and forced it to repeal the three hated anti-farmer, anti-people and pro-corporate Farm Laws. The working class and other sections of working people supported this struggle to the hilt.

The second set of struggles were the All India Strike actions of the working class, the first on 26 November 2020, which coincided with the march of the farmers to Delhi and the beginning of that iconic struggle; and the second was the two-day nationwide strike on 28-29 March 2022. Crores of workers and employees took part in both these strike actions, which were fully supported by the peasantry, which held large actions to make it a rural Bharat Bandh.

### **DEMANDS OF THE DELHI RALLY**

The major demands of the working people

raised by the 5 April Delhi Rally were as follows:

1. Ensure Minimum wages @ Rs 26,000 per month and Pension @ Rs 10,000 per month to all workers; No contractorisation of work; Scrap Agnipath Scheme.
2. Legally ensure MSP @ C2+50% for all farm produce with guaranteed procurement.
3. One time loan waiver by the central government to all poor and middle peasants and agricultural workers; pension to all of them above 60 years.
4. Scrapping of four Labour Codes and Electricity Amendment Bill 2022.
5. Job security and guarantee for all; Expand MGNREGA and increase workdays to 200 with minimum wages @Rs600 per day; Pay all pending wages; Enact a National Urban Employment Guarantee Act.
6. Stop Privatisation of PSUs and Public Services; Scrap National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP).
7. Arrest Price Rise, Withdraw GST on food items and essentials; Reduce the central excise duty on petrol/diesel/kerosene/ cooking gas substantially.
8. Universalise the Public Distribution System (PDS) and expand its scope to include 14 essential items; Ensure food and income support to all Non tax payer families.
9. Stringent implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA); withdraw the amendments to Forest (Conservation) Act and Rules that allow the union government to permit clearance of a forest without even informing the residents.

10. Stop repression of the marginalised sections and ensure social justice.

11. Ensure universal and quality Health and Education for all; Scrap New Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

12. Ensure Housing to all.

13. Tax the Super Rich; Enhance Corporate Tax; Introduce Wealth Tax.



### **POLITICAL THRUST**

The 5 April Delhi rally not only condemned the pro-corporate, anti-worker, anti-peasant and anti-national policies of the Modi-led BJP government but also the communal divisive agenda of the RSS, the ideological mentor of the BJP. It called upon the people of the entire country to uphold their unity, defeat the divisive machinations of the RSS-BJP and all communal forces of different hues and strengthen united struggles against the disastrous neoliberal policies being pursued by the corporate communal nexus in power. It condemned the heinous attempts to ignite communal violence in some states during the recent Ram Navami festival.

The Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally reiterated the call of the Mazdoor Kisan National Convention held on 5 September 2022, that the struggle today is not only for our immediate demands of livelihood and living and working conditions. It is also to save the country's economy and to protect its self-reliance, which is being compromised by the BJP government despite all its dubious talk of 'Atmanirbharta'.

It is to save the secular democratic

character of our society being destroyed by the present regime. It is to save the nation from the onslaught of the RSS-led communal forces masquerading as the saviours of Hindus, while in fact pushing tens of crores of poor toiling people, including large numbers believing in the Hindu faith, into poverty, unemployment, and distress through their policies.

At the same time this government has been extending bonanzas to the big monopoly companies, Adani, Ambani, and the likes, by continuously lowering the corporate tax rates, abolishing wealth tax, declaring moratorium on payment of charges/taxes, on debt repayments etc. The Super Rich have amassed wealth even during the pandemic. In an obscene display of inequalities in our country, the richest 1% corner more than 70% of the GDP and lowest 50% of people have less than 10%. The central government has written off loans worth a whopping Rs 10.72 lakh crore to its crony corporates in the last seven years.

The Oxfam Report on Inequality in India in 2022, titled "Survival of the Richest", gives some shocking details of the stark growth of inequality in the country during the last few years.

The rally gave a call to work tirelessly to defeat the neoliberal, communal and authoritarian regime of the BJP in the ensuing parliament elections. This is a must to strengthen united struggles for alternative policies and save the country and its people from disaster. The alternative pro-poor policies being pursued by the LDF government in Kerala, despite the hurdles created by the BJP government at the centre, were highlighted by the speakers.

### **WIDESPREAD SUPPORT**

Eminent economist Prabhat Patnaik was the chairman of the reception committee that oversaw the arrangements for the rally. Many eminent people from different fields and intellectuals including Irfan Habib, Sumit Sarkar, Utsa Patnaik, Jayati Ghosh, C P Chandrasekhar, N Ram, P Sainath, Admiral L Ramdas, Naseeruddin Shah, Teesta Setalvad, Syeda Hameed, Achin Vanaik and others released a statement in support of the rally.

A large number of intellectuals and other progressive sections of the people including employees working in different sectors like insurance, banks, IT, telecom, state and central government supported the demands raised by the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally.

However, most of the mainstream print media, which has been chronically ignoring burning day-to-day issues of the people, choosing instead to highlight communal divisive issues, ignored this rally as well. However, sections of the electronic media were forced to cover it.

### **HUGE PUBLIC MEETING**

The huge public meeting which filled the whole of Ramlila Maidan to overflowing was

chaired and addressed by a presidium comprising K Hemalata, Ashok Dhawale and A Vijayaraghavan, presidents of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU respectively. Prabhat Patnaik delivered the welcome speech, in which he underlined the significance of this united rally. Vijoo Krishnan and B Venkat, general secretaries of AIKS and AIAWU respectively addressed the gathering. Tapan Sen, general secretary of CITU made the concluding remarks. The public meeting was conducted by A R Sindhu (CITU), P Krishnaprasad (AIKS) and Vikram Singh (AIAWU).

Among those who addressed the rally were Hannan Mollah, Amra Ram, Biplab Majumdar, and Zahoor from the AIKS; V Sivadasan, MP, Tushar Ghosh, Bhola Prasad Diwakar, and Sarita Sharma from the AIAWU; and Srikant Mishra, general secretary of All India Insurance Employees' Association, Parashar, general secretary of the Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers, P Abhimanyu, general secretary of BSNL Employees' Union, Subhash Lamba, president of All India State Government Employees' Federation and Debashis Basu Chowdhury, general secretary of Bank Employees' Federation of India.

It was a memorable rally indeed. The unity of the workers and peasants that was achieved through the campaign for the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally and by the rally itself needs to be further strengthened to develop united struggles at all levels in the days ahead to ensure the defeat of the communal corporate forces, the victory of the democratic secular forces, and, most important, for a radical change in policies in favour of the working people of India.

□

# UNITE AND FIGHT FOR PRO PEOPLE POLICIES SEVENTEENTH CONFERENCE OF CITU

- K Hemalata



greeted the conference in the inaugural session. Significantly all of them emphasised the need to take the unity developed at the national level, up to the grass root level.

CITU President Hemalata delivered the presidential address in the delegates' session and Tapan Sen placed the general secretary's report in two parts. 98 delegates

The 17<sup>th</sup> conference of CITU that concluded on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2023 called upon the working class to get ready to combat and defeat attacks of neoliberalism and communal divisive forces, both being aggressively promoted by the Modi led BJP government. It exhorted the working class to uphold its unity and strengthen united struggles to achieve change in the policies in favour of the working class and all sections of the toiling masses.

The inaugural session was marked by welcome songs by Chintan Vikas, Janni and AIIEA troupe, the welcome address by the honorary president of the reception committee, introductory remarks by Tapan Sen, general secretary of CITU. Leaders of central trade unions - R Chandrasekharan, vice president of INTUC, Amarjeet Kaur, general secretary of AITUC, Nagnath, general secretary of Karnataka state committee of HMS, K Soma Shekar, vice president of AIUTUC, B Rajendran Nair, national secretary of TUCC, Sonia George, national secretary of SEWA, Clifton, national secretary of AICCTU, V Veluswamy, national secretary of LPF and Ashok Ghosh, general secretary of UTUC

in total participated in the discussions on the general secretary's report – 40 including 10 women on the first part and 58 including 6 women on the second. In addition, several delegates gave their suggestions in writing.

The future tasks, movemental and organisational, were presented by the general secretary, in a separate session.

On 19<sup>th</sup> January, the conference commemorated the memory of the martyrs who laid down their lives on that day in 1982, the first country wide general strike after Independence, called by the joint trade union movement. The demands of that general strike included the demands of the peasants and agricultural workers, who participated in large numbers in the strike and demonstrations. The ten martyrs who were killed in police firing on that day included peasants and agricultural workers. CITU, AIKS and AIAWU have been observing 19<sup>th</sup> January as worker peasant solidarity Day. This year, the posters for the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023 Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally, called by CITU, AIKS and AIAWU were jointly released by the leaders of the three organisations during the 17<sup>th</sup> conference.

The topics selected in this conference for discussions were – ‘Organising workers in modern manufacturing sector – importance and challenges’, ‘On the changing profile of employment relations’, ‘Internal migration of workers in India in the context of neoliberalism and Covid catastrophe’ and ‘Working class fight against communalism-need for counter offensive’.

In addition to the leaders of the fraternal trade union organisations from AIIEA, BEFI, CCGE&W, AISGEF, BSNLEU, etc the conference was also greeted by Vijoo Krishnan, general secretary of All India Kisan Sabha, A Vijayaraghavan, president of All India Agricultural Workers’ Union, PK Sreemathy, president of All India Democratic Women’s Association, AA Rahim, president of Democratic Youth Federation of India and VP Sanu, president of Student Federation of India. Two delegates from AIKS side attended this conference.

The conference unanimously passed ten resolutions: i) On 5<sup>th</sup> April MazdoorKisanSangharsh Rally, ii) Scrap the four labour codes, iii) Defeat of the divisive machinations of the Hindutva communal forces, iv) Defend the LDF government in Kerala, v) Restore the Old Pension System, scrap NPS, strengthen EPS and universal pension, vi) Deteriorating industrial safety, vii) United struggles for the Right to Work, viii) Solidarity to the working class struggles all over the world, ix) Violence against women and x) Immediate measures to control price rise.

The general secretary’s report, the treasurer’s report and the future tasks were unanimously adopted by the conference. The conference elected anew team of 39 office bearers with Hemalata as president, Tapan Sen



as general secretary and M Saibabu as treasurer. 9 out of the 39 office bearers are women.

Hemalata made the concluding remarks and on behalf of the entire conference, thanked the Karnataka state committee of CITU and the reception committee for the excellent arrangements for the conference. Meenakshi Sundaram, general secretary of Karnataka state committee of CITU presented the vote of thanks.

The massive rally in the afternoon of 22<sup>nd</sup> January, at National College Grounds, the venue being named after Maruti Manpade, was presided by S Varalakshmi, president of Karnataka state committee of CITU. The rally was addressed by Tapan Sen, Meenakshi Sundaram and Hemalata. Mahantesh, secretary of Karnataka state committee of CITU gave the welcome address and BN Manjunath, secretary of the Karnataka state committee presented the vote of thanks □

# 10<sup>TH</sup> ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF AIAWU

- Vikram Singh

The 10<sup>th</sup> all India conference of AIAWU concluded successfully at Howrah in West Bengal with the slogan “reach out to people, build class unity and struggle for victory”. The conference elected a general council with 155 members. The general council in its first meeting elected A Vijayaraghavan as president and B Venkat as general secretary of the union. The general council also elected a central working committee consisting of 61 members and 15 office bearers. AIKS general secretary Vijoo Krishnan greeted the conference.

The general secretary’s report highlighted the current political, economic, and social situations and their impact on agricultural workers and the rural poor.

More than 44 delegates from different states participated in the discussion on the general secretary’s report.

A seminar was also organised on the second day of the conference which was

inaugurated by the Polit Bureau member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Prakash Karat. Madhura Swaminathan, professor, and head of economic analysis unit of Indian Statistical Institute, R Ramakumar, professor School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, member of parliament, Rajya Sabha were the speakers in this seminar.

The credentials report was presented by Vikram Singh. According to the report, which was unanimously adopted by the conference, a total of 684 delegates and 11 observers participated in the conference. Out of the total delegates, 566 were male and 118 were female, while out of the total observers, nine were male and three were female. In addition to this, 12 fraternal delegates attended the conference out of which 5 delegates were from AIKS.

A massive public meeting was organised



on the occasion of the conference in Howrah on February 17, 2023. Thousands of agricultural workers and the local public attended the meeting and showed their solidarity with the agricultural workers' movement. Despite the TMC government's restrictions on public gatherings at the Howrah ground and denial of permission for the public meeting, the mobilisation at the public meeting was significant. The rally ground for the public meeting was filled with people, and thousands more occupied the roads on both sides of the ground. Before the public meeting, a procession was held from the conference venue to the rally ground. The main speaker of the public meeting was Pinarayi Vijayan, chief minister of Kerala and Polit Bureau member of the CPI(M). Other speakers included Mohammad Salim, Polit Bureau member and secretary of West Bengal state committee of CPI(M), Sridip Bhattacharyya, chairperson of the reception committee, A Vijayaraghavan, all India president, B Venkat, general secretary, and Tushar Gosh, state secretary of the union. Amiya Patra, all India vice president of the union, presided over the public meeting. Also, present on the stage



were Biman Bose, chairperson of the Left Front in Bengal, Vijoo Krishnan, general secretary of AIKS, and Ramchandra Dom, Polit Bureau member of the CPI(M) and general secretary of DSMM and Hannan Mollah.

The conference adopted 15 resolutions. After detailed discussions and reply from the general secretary, the conference report was adopted unanimously. The conference gave a call to expand the organisation into 300 districts and set an organisational target of one crore members. □





# THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORKER-PEASANT SANGHARSH RALLY

- P Krishnaprasad

The Worker-Peasant Sangharsh Rally successfully held on 05 April 2023 had manifested the commencement of a spate of countrywide militant struggles against the expropriation of the people by corporate forces. The Rally had appealed to build worker-peasant unity and expand the coordination system among workers, peasants and agricultural workers up to town and village level across the country. This class unity will enable us to advance the class struggle on the burning livelihood issues of the people that are pivotal in building the Left and Democratic alternative against the ruling class that is succumbing more and more to the dictates of the global capital.

The rally was one of the largest mobilisations of the workers and the peasants at Delhi in the post-independent period. As per the reports, more than one lakh people

participated. The rally had declared enduring struggles under the combined strength of class unity, the worker-peasant alliance, on concrete demands on local issues as well as common issues linking them with the ruling class policies. The unity of the basic classes and unleashing massive struggles under its leadership is the concrete path to overcome the current acute agrarian crisis in India and end the highly exploitative and brutal neo-liberal regimes being controlled by the International Finance Capital-Monopoly Capital (IFC-MC) combine.

The genesis of the agrarian crisis can be traced back to the colonial period, with the ascendancy of imperialism. The big capitalist class and landlord class combine that collaborated with imperialism emerged as the ruling classes of India. These forces were resolute on not carrying forward agrarian



reforms, especially the land reforms and ending the concentration of land, but made full efforts to transform feudal landlords as capitalist landlords. Thus, the ruling class policies caused a hindrance in developing India as a modern advanced industrial society during the last seventy-five years post-Independence.

With the collapse of the dirigisme regime and introduction of neoliberal policies, the clout of the IFC became hegemonic and the Monopoly Capital is increasingly getting integrated with it. The unbridled escalation in the cost of production mainly due to the hike in input prices along with inflation that spirals the cost of living, interlinked with the crash in the price of agricultural produce across the crops denotes the potent corporate control over Indian agriculture. Farming has become a loss-making occupation. The peasant households are pushed to a vicious cycle of indebtedness. Suicide among peasants and daily wage workers has become rampant. The agrarian distress under neo-liberal capitalism causes ruthless pauperization, losing cattle, land and trapped in deep indebtedness, thus forcing the peasantry to join the torrent of migrant workers whose number is swelling day by day and has crossed twenty-three crores now. It is the single largest size class in India today.

The NDA-led Vajpayee Government of 1999-2004 had been most notorious for opening up the floodgates of import of farm produce, privatization of the Public Sector Units and facilitating entry of Multinational Companies and Monopoly Corporates into agriculture, thus aggravating the agrarian crisis further. Indebtedness and peasant suicides became acute in specific regions like Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Wayanad in Kerala and

Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh and in states like Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Chhattisgarh. The subsequent anger and strife among the peasantry compelled them to build resistance, unleash struggles; thus, the agrarian crisis has become the principal, burning political issue at all India level.

The NDA and Vajpayee Government faced severe defeat in the 2004 election mainly due to the unrest among the peasantry and the rural people. For the first time in history, sixty-four Left and Democratic members got elected to the Parliament and with their active support the UPA-I Government was formed based on a common minimum programme. The UPA-I Government had facilitated many measures to address the acute agrarian crisis such as forming National Commission on Farmers (NCF) in 2004 with MS Swaminathan as its chairman, the enactment of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and loan waiver to the framers to the tune of Rs.70000 crore.

The NCF submitted its report in 2006 with the principal proposal to provide the minimum support price,  $MSP@C2+50\%$  (one and half times the cost of production), for all crops with guaranteed procurement. However, the UPA-I and UPA-II Governments that were in power till 2014 did not implement this very crucial recommendation due to the stranglehold of the IFC-MC combine over those ruling class parties leading the UPA. In contrast, pro-corporate policies including privatization of Banks, Insurance, deregulation of prices of petroleum products were carried out, which were vehemently opposed by the peasant organisations, trade unions and Left and Democratic forces inside and outside the

Parliament. The UPA-II Government was tinted with widespread corporate corruption on various Government projects.

In the 2014 general election, BJP had to bank on the Left and Democratic alternative policies of MSP@C2+50% on all crops and two crore employment per year in its election manifesto and this campaign helped BJP to gather the support of the peasant and rural masses especially from the crisis ridden regions. But in contrast, the Narendra Modi-led Union Government did not implement MSP@C2+50% in the last eight years of its rule and the rate of unemployment has been at its peak since independence. As the principle ruling class party, the BJP-RSS combine has succumbed to the pressure of IFC-MC combine and further intensified the neo-liberal reforms.

These policies further escalate pauperisation of the peasantry and large-scale rural to urban migration. Privatization is rampant and the planning process has been dismantled to facilitate corporatisation of the entire sector of the economy. Three Farm Acts aimed at corporatisation of agriculture were imposed on the people without even allowing any discussion in the parliament. India has tumbled to 107th position in 2021 in the Global Poverty Index from 56th position in 2014. The four Labour Codes aimed at denying trade union rights, minimum wage and employment security were imposed. The allocation to MGNREGS was systematically curtailed by Rs.30000 crores and the number of average working days were reduced to mere forty two against the promised one hundred that too with paltry wage rate considering the unrestrained inflation. The onslaught on the poor people is at the peak as from 01 January



2023 the subsidized ration of rice and wheat at Rs.2 and Rs.3 respectively is annulled. The food security faces acute danger as a whopping cut of Rs.90000 crores has been announced in the budget 2023-24, it can lead to hunger and starvation deaths.

In retaliation, the peasantry and the rural working class have initiated a forging worker-peasant alliance to resist these neo-liberal attacks. AIKS, AIWU and CITU have consistently unleashed struggles independently as well as jointly during this period, through forming issue based united platforms like Bhumi Adhikar Andolan (BAA), All India Kisan Sangharsh Samanwaya Samithi (AIKSCC), and the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM). The Kisan Long March of Maharashtra had moved the imagination of the toiling masses across the world. The first ever Worker-Peasant Sangharsh Rally in post independent India on 05 September 2018 at Delhi attended by more than two lakh people was a crucial action that boosted the morale of the peasant and the worker masses. The historic victory achieved by the repeal of three Farm Acts through the united peasant movement actively supported by the joint trade

union movement marks shockwave to the neo-liberal forces in the last three decades and was decisive as a shield in protecting the democracy in India at a crucial juncture of authoritarian and divisive onslaughts on the people by the communal bigotry of the BJP-RSS combine and the Narendra Modi-led Union Government.

Most importantly, the current world political situation is marked with the third systemic crisis of the world capitalist order. The second great depression of the 1930s had put an end to the then colonial world order of Imperialism. Within a span of the next two decades China and India, the two most populated countries, were liberated due to incessant united struggles under the leadership of the exploited classes. The current systemic crisis too is expected to radically alter the current Imperialist Neo-liberal world order. The struggle by the working class and peasantry has been intensified especially in the most advanced capitalist countries. The neo-liberal world order will be confronted by the working class and toiling masses world over.

This is the context of the second Worker-Peasant Sangharsh Rally on 05 April 2023. The present path of destruction and peril under the grab of the IFC-MC combine needs to be reversed. The corporatisation of agriculture shall be halted at any cost. As an alternative, cooperative and collective agriculture shall be developed to rise above the agrarian crisis. This is inevitable to seize the surplus created through the sweat of labour and share it with the peasants and workers as minimum support price and minimum wage respectively. The key demands of the Rally include repeal of the four Labour Codes, comprehensive loan waiver, pension, food security through strengthening

Public Distribution System and employment, education and health to all.

The re-election of the Left and Democratic Front in Kerala in 2021 is a decisive victory of the worker and peasant movement at the national level. The LDF Government has a crucial role in ensuring the highest minimum wage to the daily wage workers and minimum support price to the paddy farmers. The RSS-BJP led Modi Government is hell-bent on suffocating the LDF Government of Kerala, denying the due share of financial resources and muddling with the various development projects of Kerala. The Left and Democratic forces with the active involvement of the worker and peasant masses usurping the leadership of the emerging united front of people against the BJP-RSS combine is essential to achieve victory over current corporate dominance on the political economy of our country and to protect democracy, federalism and secularism in India.

Thus, the Rally organised on 05 April 2023 was decisive in advancing struggles and building the Left and Democratic Front, more than as an electoral front, a struggle front on the burning livelihood issues of the people, across the country. The united platforms of peasantry and workers, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha and the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions, have already announced their action plan to expose and fight the pro corporate policies of the Union Government. This is the concrete political direction that can enable the people of India especially the toiling masses to advance the massive struggles thus transcend the neo-liberal phase of capitalism and advance towards the path of alternative development thus to protect the rights of the workers and the peasantry. □

# SECOND PHASE OF KISAN MOVEMENT TO BUILD UP

- Hannan Mollah



of SKM would be considered. Based on that letter, the S K M postponed the movement on December 11, warning that if those demands were not fulfilled, the SKM would go on to further struggle.

Against the anti-peasant policies of the Narendra Modi government, farmers in the country, unitedly under the leadership of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), organized the longest, most united, and most historical struggle in 2020 and 2021. They faced unprecedented attacks and oppression by the government. They became victims of widespread false government propaganda and RSS propaganda. 750 of our comrades became martyrs in the struggle; thousands of false cases were registered against the farmers. Central Minister Ajay Mishra Teny, his son, and RSS goons killed four farmers and one journalist in Lakhimpur Kheri. Despite all these conspiracies, the government was forced to accept defeat, and Narendra Modi withdrew those three draconian anti-farmer Acts. It was a great and historical victory for the farmers of our country. But our other demands were not fulfilled. SKM continued the movement. Then, on December 9, 2021, the government gave an assurance in writing that other demands

But there was no action by the government. They formed a committee with anti-farmer agents of the government for MSP, but the SKM boycotted the committees as there were no terms of reference for a legal guarantee for MSP for all crops. To raise Kisan's voice against it, SKM organized a tractor rally in 600 districts and submitted a memorandum to the President against government inaction. The memorandum was then sent to the government through governors after state-level protest rallies were organized. But still, there has been no response from the government. The SKM held a huge Mahapanchayat at Jind, raised the demands, and called for 'Delhi Challo' on March 20, 2023, to resume the struggle. A large number of farmers from different states marched to Delhi Ramlila Maidan, and a massive Kisan Mahapanchayat was organized on March 20, 2023. This was a huge meeting of farmers, and more than fifty Kisan leaders from different Kisan organizations spoke at the rally.

The speakers explained the inaction and betrayal of the government, as it did nothing even after 14 months passed after the written assurance. There was massive anger among farmers as they were not getting proper prices for their products. The Fasal Bhima Yojana was proved to be a fraud as it helped the insurance companies, not farmers. Rural unemployment intensified due to the lack of work under MNREGA. The eviction of farmers from the land was happening in different states due to widespread land grabbing by corporate houses. Tribal lands were also snatched, and the Forest Rights Acts were kept without implementation. Women farmers and agricultural workers were not getting equal wages, and huge amounts of dues were not paid to them. There was a massive price crash for potatoes, onions, soybeans, mustard, etc., and farmers lost crores of rupees. The suicide rate among farmers was increasing. There was no proper procurement and no government intervention to protect farmers. A vivid explanation of farmers' difficulties was given by speakers in the meeting, and they demanded a strong, wider struggle against government betrayal.

Com. Vijoo Krishnan, General Secretary, AIKS, spoke at the gathering and explained AIKS's understanding of the current crisis and our planning for a bigger struggle. A 15-member delegation, including Hannan Mollah, Avik Saha, etc., met the Agriculture Minister, Narendra Tomar at Krishi Bhawan. We criticized the government for its long inaction, forcing the farmers to return to the street. We condemned the government's action to form a committee, which was an eyewash to hoodwink the people, in which no SKM representative was there and it was full of anti-farmer government agents and demanded to constitute

a fresh, effective representative committee to consider MSP for all crops and legal guarantee of procurement.

The government was non-committal. When we asked the government why they brought the Electricity Bill to Parliament without consultation with SKM, he said the government improved the bill as per our demand and removed the clause about abandoning subsidies for farmers in electricity charges. He repeated that the government exempted farmers from arrest and fines for stubble burning. He assured me that he would take the initiative to withdraw cases and arrange financial assistance for the martyr's family if we gave him the list of affected people from the above two categories. They would take up with state governments the recent price crash of some crops like potatoes and onions and look into the CBI/ED attack against some Kisan leaders. There has been no commitment on the loan waiver or in Ajay Mishra Teny's case. The delegation warned that Kisan would go for a bigger movement if the government failed to come up with a concrete plan for our 14-point demands and 5-point current issues as additional demands.

The delegation reported that matter to the rally and called to continue the preparation for a long struggle shortly. Now we should build up a strong movement in the states. All state-level SKMs should hold state conventions, identify local demands, and plan strong militant movements in their states. The next General Body Meeting of SKM will be held on April 30, 2023, to plan the next course of action. We appealed to all farmers to go with confidence and plan a strong movement against the Modi government's anti-farmer and pro-corporate policies. □

# **SKM NATIONAL MEETING IN DELHI DECLARES ALL INDIA STRUGGLE PROGRAMME**

**-Nidheesh Villatt**

The National Meeting of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) was held on April 30, 2023 at Delhi. More than 200 farmer leaders of constituent organisations attended. The three-member presidium of the meeting comprised Joginder Singh Ugrahan (President, BKU-Ekta Ugrahan), Ashok Dhawale (President, AIKS) and Tajinder Singh Virk (President, Tarai Kisan Sanghatan). Others who attended on behalf of the AIKS were Hannan Mollah, Vijoo Krishnan, P Krishnaprasad and Inderjit Singh.

This meeting was being held after the impressive SKM public meeting at the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on March 20. After detailed discussion the national meeting chalked out the struggle plan of action of the SKM for the coming six months.

## **SIX MONTH PLAN OF STRUGGLE**

**May 26-31:** On the core issues of demand for a remunerative MSP law, liberation from debt, farmer & farmworkers pension, comprehensive crop insurance scheme, arrest of farmer killer Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra Teni, withdrawal of false cases on farmers, compensation to Shaheed farmers families etc, from May 26-31, 2023, protests and agitations will be held in all states of India. This will include leading large protest marches to all Members of Parliament and

key political leaders in their home constituencies and submitting memorandums to them, warning them to immediately resolve all farmers demands, failing which they will face further protests. Burning local issues of farmers in each state will also be included in the memorandum of that state.

**May, June and July:** In the months of May, June and July, State and District level conventions of the SKM shall be held in every state of India to galvanise and organise farmers and farmworkers. Along with the organisations that are already in the SKM, an effort will be made to reach out to, and enlist the active support of, other farmers' organisations too.

**1-15 August:** Between 1-15 August, which includes Quit India Day August 9, mass protests in coordination with workers unions and organisations shall be held to put an end to the sale of the interest of farmers and workers to corporates by the Union Govt.

**September to mid-November:** Between September to mid-November, massive all-India Yatras will be held all over the country, which will be led by national leaders of the SKM. The Yatras will specially focus on states that will see assembly elections, such as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Telangana

etc. Along with the main national Yatras, hundreds of local sub-Yatras on foot or by vehicles will be organised by the SKM throughout the country.

**October 3:** On October 3, the day on which BJP leaders murdered four farmers and a journalist at Lakhimpur Kheri, an all-India Shaheedi Diwas shall be held.

**November 26-28:** On 26 November, the day on which the historic Dilli Chalo march of farmers reached the borders of Delhi, all-India Vijay Diwas shall be celebrated by way of holding day-night dharna for at least three days in all state capitals. In many places this action will begin with farmers' marches from various points on November 19, the day two years ago on which the prime minister was forced to announce a repeal of all three pro-corporate and anti-farmer Farm Laws, culminating in the mass dharnas from November 26.

### **THREE IMPORTANT RESOLUTIONS**

Apart from this plan of action, the SKM meeting also adopted the following resolutions:

1) SKM firmly and unequivocally supported the protest of women wrestlers of India, who have been sitting in dharna at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, demanding arrest of BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. SKM expressed solidarity with the sportspersons and demanded immediate arrest of the BJP MP. It also demanded the arrest of a Haryana minister Sandeep Singh, against whom also an FIR of sexual harassment was lodged by an international athlete on

31 December 2022. A full delegation of SKM leaders visited the protest site, met the sportspersons and conveyed the support of SKM to them.

2) SKM condemned the unleashing of Central Agencies like CBI by the BJP Central Government against former Governor Satya Pal Malik, who has been a steadfast supporter of the farmers movement and SKM. Shri Malik has been exposing the misdeeds of the BJP Govt with regard to the unnecessary loss of lives of our soldiers at Pulwama, corruption of the BJP leadership at the highest level etc. SKM lauded the bravery of Shri Malik. SKM decided that it shall support all efforts to resist the attempts of the BJP Government to muzzle Shri Malik.

3) SKM condemned the de-recognition of the oldest unions of postal workers of India - National Federation of Postal Employees and All India Postal Employees' Union - by the Union Government, allegedly because these unions supported the historic Delhi farmers struggle and donated some funds to farmers organisations. SKM expressed solidarity with the unions, demanded that their de-recognition be immediately withdrawn, and looked forward to increased worker peasant unity against the anti-farmer, anti-worker BJP Government.

All the above decisions were reported in a well-attended press conference at the Press Club of India in Delhi by Ashok Dhawale, Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Tajinder Singh Virk, Darshan Pal, Hannan Mollah and Avik Saha. □



# **BUDGET FOR THE RICH PREPARED AT THE BEHEST OF CORPORATE CRONIES**

**-AIKS**

The Union Budget 2023-24 presented by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is a Budget for the rich, prepared at the behest of the corporate cronies; it is against the interests of the farmers, the poor and toiling masses. It was high on rhetoric and hollow on actual allocation for agriculture and rural development. The BJP Government has refused to implement the Minimum Support Prices as per the M.S.Swaminathan Commission recommendations of C2+50 % nor ensured legal guarantee for MSP leading to increasing distress for farmers. This Budget does nothing to mitigate the situation. The BJP Government is exacting a revenge from farmers for the humiliating defeat suffered by it at the hands of the historic united farmers' movement which forced it to withdraw the three pro-corporate farm Acts. There has been a drastic cut on expenditure for rural employment, MGNREGA, food Security, fertiliser subsidy etc.

This Budget coming at a time when uncertainties loom large due to the recession, the threats of climate change and other exigencies fails to generate confidence in the farmers. There is nothing in it to enhance incomes of the peasantry and toiling masses. The Budget Estimate for agriculture has been substantially reduced from 1,24,000 crores in 2022-23 to 1,15,531.79 crores this year. Actually, there has been a comprehensive reduction in budgetary allocations for agriculture in this budget.

The much-hyped Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi has seen no increase from last year. The allocation is Rs.60,000 crores. If the

Government's claim of about 12 crore beneficiaries is taken then at least Rs.72,000 crores should have been allocated. Even on the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana in comparison with the 2022-23 Budget Estimates of Rs.15,500 crores this Budget only has set Rs.13625 crores. Green revolution which was earlier advertised as core scheme and had an allocation of Rs.6,747 crores in 2021-22 has had no allocation in the last as well as the present Budget. There has been a drastic cut in fertiliser subsidies from Rs.2,25,000 crores in 2022-23 Revised Estimates to Rs.1,75,000 crores in Budget Estimates of 2023-24, a 22 per cent cut of Rs.50,000 crore. Such a move could have an adverse impact on productivity and impact production of food grains. The much-touted allocation for natural farming this year appears to be marginal at 459 crores. The allocation for Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana has been drastically cut from Rs.10,433 crores to Rs.7,150 crores. The allocation for Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sinchai Yojna has been cut from Rs.12,954 crores in 2022-23 BE to Rs.10,787 Crore in the present Budget. The allocation for Market Intervention and Price Support Scheme which was Rs.1500 crores in 2022-23 Revised Estimates does not find any mention in the 2023-24 Budget.

The allocation for rural employment which was Rs.1,53,525.41 crores in the Revised Estimates of 2022-23 has been drastically cut to Rs.1,01,474.51 crores in the 2023-24 Budget Estimates. The allotment for MGNREGA has been cut from Rs.89,000 crores in Revised Estimate of 2022-23 to

merely Rs.60,000 crores in the 2023-24 Budget Estimates. This is at a time when an estimated 2.72 lakh crores are required if the Government intends to provide the legally guaranteed 100 days of employment. The budgetary allocations disregards its own Economic Survey which showed that demand under the rural employment scheme was still higher than the pre-pandemic period, pointing towards rural distress. There have been continuous reports of inadequate fund allocations under the vital scheme which has led to delayed payments and stoppage of work across states, and thus squeezing out available days of employment. This year's budget reflects the apathy of the government towards the country's rural poor. The allocation for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana has also been cut from Rs.5758 crore to Rs.2273 crores. All talk of generating 2 crore employment every year has been conveniently forgotten.

The biggest fall has been seen in the food subsidy bill, from 287194 crores in RE of 2022-23 to 1,97,350 crores in BE of 2023-34, a whopping reduction of 31 per cent. The narrative built around free ration allocation under the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana, replacing the pandemic time additional foodgrain scheme in actual is a farce. The clear intention is to reduce spending on food security and the Public Distribution System. The reduced food subsidy bill has direct consequences for procurement of foodgrains. The budgetary allocations for decentralized procurement to foodgrains under the National Food Security Act has been reduced from 72,282.50 crores in RE (2022-23) to just 59,793.00 crores in this year's BE, a reduction of close to 12500 crores or 17 per cent. The allocation for food subsidy to Food Corporation of India has been drastically cut from Rs. 1,45,920 crores to Rs.1,37,207

crores a cut of Rs.8,713 crores. These steps are cause for concern not just from the point of farmers' incomes but also India's food security when inflationary trends cannot be totally discounted.

The Budget also smacks of a blatant effort to centralise cooperatives and bring in an environment for control by the Union Government. This is against the rights of States under a federal system. Tall claims about setting an Agriculture Accelerator Fund to encourage agri startups and decentralised cold storages etc. are part of the regular rhetoric. It is likely to meet the same fate as the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund which was also announced with much fanfare; it was allocated 500 crores in 2022-23, but brought down to only 150 crores in the Revised Estimates. The talk of a digital public infrastructure for agriculture also is aimed at helping corporate companies rather than farmers.

All talk of Amrit kal, is hollow and no substantial relief has been provided for India's food producers, toiling masses and poor. Claims made in the Finance Minister's speech come out as utter lies, once actual allocations are taken note of. The last full budget of this government does not commit anything to disown its anti-people, anti-farmer, and anti-worker policies. It only further bolsters it. The Budget offers no relief to the masses in terms of health, education or social security. The BJP Government has also exposed its communal character by drastically cutting allocation for the Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities by Rs.1200 crores from Rs.1810 crores to Rs.610 crores.

AIKS calls upon all its units to rise in protest against this anti-farmer, anti-worker, pro-corporate Budget by uniting with all peasants and workers to expose the betrayal by the Narendra Modi led BJP Government.

□

# SKM MEMORANDUM TO UNION MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE

- SKM

Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the largest platform of farmers and farmworkers organisations in the country is holding a **Kisan Mahapanchayat** at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan today, 20th March, 2023. Lakhs of farmers from all states and union territories are at Delhi to attend the Mahapanchayat.

The Mahapanchayat has demanded that the Union Government fulfil the commitments it had given in writing to Samyukt Kisan Morcha on 9th December, 2021 vide Letter of Mr. Sanjay Aggarwal, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, bearing No. Secretary/AFW/2021/Miss/1 and also take effective steps to mitigate the ever increasing and spiralling crisis being faced by farmers. It may be recalled that relying on this letter of the Government, Samyukt Kisan Morcha had lifted the Morchas on the borders of Delhi and all protest demonstrations on 11th December 2021. Today, over 15 months later, the Union Government has not fulfilled the promises made to the farmers.

We request you once again, to urge the Union Government to take immediate concrete steps to resolve the pending issues, and pay heed to the problems of the farmers by fulfilling their following demands:

1. A law to guarantee MSP for all crops, using the C2+50 % formula, based on the recommendation of the Swaminathan Commission and assured procurement should be immediately enacted and

implemented.

2. Samyukt Kisan Morcha has pointed out several times that the committee constituted by the Union Government on MSP and its stated agenda is contrary to the demands of the farmers. This committee should be dismissed, and a new committee on MSP only should be re-constituted, with due representation of farmers, by including representatives of Samyukt Kisan Morcha, as promised by the Union Govt.

3. Due to rising input costs in agriculture and not receiving remunerative prices for their crops, more than 80% of the farmers are trapped under massive debt, and are forced to commit suicide. In such a situation, Samyukt Kisan Morcha demands immediate waiver of all loans of all farmers and reduction of input prices including fertilisers.

4. The Electricity Amendment Bill, 2022 referred to JPC should be withdrawn. The Union Government had given written assurance to Samyukt Kisan Morcha that the bill will be introduced in Parliament only after discussion with Samyukt Kisan Morcha but despite this, it introduced this bill in parliament without any discussion.

5. Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra 'Teni', the main conspirator in the murder of four farmers and a journalist at Tikonia in Lakhimpur Kheri district, should be dismissed from the cabinet and arrested and sent to jail.

6. The Government should fulfil its promise of providing compensation and rehabilitation to the families of all farmers who were martyred during the farmers' movement as well as the martyred and injured farmers at Lakhimpur Kheri.

7. The Government should replace the ineffective and virtually abandoned PMFBY by implementing universal, comprehensive and effective crop insurance and compensation package for all crops, to compensate for losses being constantly faced by farmers due to drought, flood, hailstorm, untimely and/or excessive rain, crop related diseases, wild animals, stray cattle etc. The loss should be assessed on the basis of individual plots.

8. A farmer pension scheme of ₹ 5,000 per month should be immediately implemented for all farmers and agricultural labourers.

9. The fake cases which have been registered against the farmers in BJP ruled states, and other states and Union Territories, during the farmers movement, should be withdrawn immediately.

10. Land allocation should be made for the construction of a memorial for the martyred farmers at Singhu Morcha.

11. The Government has brought forth Forest Conservation Rules 2022 on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and has placed it before Parliament. These Rules framed to implement use of forest-land for non-forest purposes completely undermine the implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006. The National ST Commission has also objected to these Rules. Samyukt Kisan Morcha demands that these Rules be immediately withdrawn.

12. A number of projects are being planned in

various states at the behest of private and corporate profit motive. In these, the Governments are not following any steps of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. Farmers are being threatened, even with bulldozers, to hand-over their lands and accept paltry compensation. Samyukt Kisan Morcha demands that all these illegalities be stopped and the process under law be followed.

13. Farmers of India have long demanded the constitution of Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) as a statutory body with due representation of farmers organisations and independent experts. Samyukt Kisan Morcha demands that this should be done immediately and the practice of arbitrarily appointing politically linked people should be stopped.

14. Samyukt Kisan Morcha takes strong objection to the Union Government's attack on farmers' leadership through raids by central agencies like CBI, as was done in Punjab recently. Samyukt Kisan Morcha demands that this be stopped immediately.

Through this Memorandum, the *annadatas* of the country wants to convey their angst and anxiety to the Union Government. We request you to remind the Union Government of its written promises and get the demands of the country's farmers for complete debt relief, crop insurance, and farmer pension fulfilled, immediately. We request the Union Government, through you, to stop challenging the patience of the farmers. If the Government continues to renege on its promises and responsibility towards farmers, then farmers will be left with no option but to intensify the struggle. □

# **JANUARY 26: JIND KISAN MAHAPANCHAYAT CALL FOR NEXT ROUND OF FARMER MOVEMENT**

**- Inderjit Singh**

On the occasion of Republic Day, at the call of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a large number of people gathered in the massive Kisan Mahapanchayat in Jind, Haryana, and expressed their resolve and unity for future struggles. On the same day, tractor parades were organized at the district headquarters of all other states of the country. It is noteworthy that after the suspension of the historic 13-month farmers' movement a year ago, the SKM witnessed unprecedented mobilization in the Jind Mahapanchayat and in a series of various activities across the country. In the national meeting of SKM in Karnal on December 24, three major decisions were taken in view of the betrayal by the Central government. The first was that Kisan Mahapanchayat of farmers from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh should be

held in Jind on 26th January.

The second was that tractor parades will be held at the district headquarters in all other states of India and the third was that of March to the Parliament during the budget session.

In this context, there were three special reasons behind choosing the day of January 26; the first one was that on January 26, 2021, during the farmers' movement, by infiltrating the otherwise largely successful tractor parade in Delhi, the Modi government had hatched a deep conspiracy to crush the movement. Fortunately, farmers were aware of Modi's intent and minimised the harm. At this critical juncture, the farmers of Haryana played a special role in marching towards the borders overnight.

Similarly, on November 3, in Lakhimpur



Kheri, Union Minister of State Ajay Mishra Teni's son killed four farmers and one journalist by running his SUV over agitating farmers. Despite this, he was not removed from the post of Minister of State for Home and preparations are being made to release his accused son. On the contrary, many farmer activists have been put in jail.

Today again, it is necessary to give a befitting reply to the mischiefs happening from inside and outside to break the unity of the farmers. Secondly, it is necessary to challenge the attack on the Constitution and constitutional rights being imposed through dictatorial rules of the Central government. Therefore, 26<sup>th</sup> January was more appropriate. Thirdly, after the withdrawal of 3 laws, on 9 December 2021, Sanjay Aggarwal, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, assured the SKM in a written message about the formation of a committee for the legal guarantee of the minimum support price and the amendment of the Electricity Bill – 2022 would take place in the House. All the concerned parties would be consulted before being introduced. Apart from this, the return of all the lawsuits and false cases made during the movement, and demands on other subjects were accepted.

In all these cases, the Modi government has betrayed farmers, for which many militant actions have been taken across the country on the call of SKM. The Modi government had to bow down under the pressure of the movement in the case of withdrawal of three agricultural laws, and this in itself was a big achievement. But due to the new liberalisation policies, the corporate strategy of controlling the agriculture sector continues unabated. Due to this, the crisis of agriculture has been continuously worsening. The announcement of

doubling the income of farmers by 2022 was also just a *jumla*. It is obvious that the standard of living of peasants, agricultural labourers and other rural sections is continuously declining. As a result of climate change, crop failure due to extreme weather has become a persistent problem. Kisan Sabha and other farmer organisations in Haryana are agitating for pending compensation and insurance claims for crop failure. The situation is worsening due to increase in input costs and lack of adequate increase in the prices of agricultural produce.

In this background, farmers gathered in the Jind Mahapanchayat, with a highly impressive participation of women. This gathering has squarely destroyed the false propaganda of so-called splits in the SKM.

In this Mahapanchayat - organised and hosted by Haryana wing of SKM, the top leadership of the farmers' movement, Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Hannan Mollah, Rakesh Tikait, Darshan Pal, Atul Anjan, Yudhvir Singh, Ashish Mittal, Ruldu Singh, Amit Saha, Satyawan, Tejendra Singh Virk etc. were included as keynote speakers. All India Kisan Sabha General Secretary Vijoo Krishnan, Finance Secretary P Krishnaprasad, Inderjit Singh, Office Secretary Sumit da, Chhaganlal Choudhary from Rajasthan, Bharat Singh from Uttar Pradesh, Baljit Grewal and Major Singh Punnewal from Punjab, and Dr Kuldeep Tanwar from Himachal Pradesh are also present at the dais. Farmers from Punjab participated in large numbers and Haryana Kisan Sabha's remarkable attendance was also visible from the red flags waving along with the flags of other organisations.

AIKS Haryana state president Master Balbir Singh remained in the Presidium and state secretary Sumit Dalal handled the

management of stage during the Mahapanchayat. In the beginning Phool Singh Sheokand, the convenor of the Mahapanchayat's arrangement committee, welcomed everyone. State committee treasurer Dimple, on behalf of Haryana Kisan Sabha, in her passionate speech appreciated the increasing participation of women and announced more participation in the coming rounds of agitation. Comrade Dimple strongly condemned the sexual assault on a well-known athlete by Haryana minister Sandeep Singh and informed how Janwadi Mahila Samiti and mass organizations protested and condemned the hoisting of the national flag by the accused Minister in Pehwa on January. It is worth mentioning that on the same occasion a young woman dared to show strong resistance by objecting to the Minister hoisting the tricolour. In reaction, the officials and the minister's henchmen made a cowardly attack and misbehaved with her.

Everyone praised the Kisan Sabha unit of Jind district and other organizations for the unprecedented organization of langar service in Mahapanchayat. What did they do? It was the first-of-its-kind experiment in Haryana. On the call of 'Roti Bachane ki Ladai Mein Roti Ka Sahyog', an appeal was made to all farmer and agricultural labourer households in all villages of Narwana tehsil to send rotis for the Mahapanchayat langar. Along with this, many quintals of milk came from the villages for tea. MNREGA workers of Ghaso village contributed Rs 50 per person financially and one bag of sugar. Typist Union sent Rs 2,600, while Lone village sent dry goods worth Rs 26,000 and rotis for 6,000 people. Dhamtan Saheb as well as Jind and Danoda Gurudwaras supported the langar. Sarva Karmachari Sangh made available 20 gas cylinders for the langar,

and Anaj Mandi Aadhti Association also extended full cooperation to the Mahapanchayat.

On this occasion, doctors and medical staff who had set up a permanent medical camp at the Tikri border during the farmers' movement set up a medical camp at the Mahapanchayat. Indian Medical Association sent medicines worth Rs 10,000 to the medical camp.

In the Mahapanchayat, Dr Darshan Pal made a condolence proposal in the memory of the martyred farmers in the movement and tribute was paid by keeping silence. Joginder Singh Ugrahan said that the interests of very powerful corporate classes were behind the Modi government and only by fighting a long and difficult battle against this corporate sector, the farmers and labourers could achieve liberation.

Rakesh Tikait said that the main agenda of BJP was to make people fight among themselves in the name of religion and caste. He specially praised the farmers of Haryana and Punjab who by maintaining their unity spilled water on the dark plans of BJP.

Hannan Mollah said in his address that Modi had betrayed and betrayed the farmers and farm labourers of the country. He said that here was widespread anger against this betrayal which was evident in such a huge Mahapanchayat on Republic Day and lakhs of farmers participating in tractor parades in 600 districts of the country.

Comrade Hannan announced that the Parliament would be surrounded during the Budget session for which all the allies should gather and prepare to overthrow the most anti-farmer government till date. □

# AIKS THIRD KISAN LONG MARCH ENDS IN VICTORY STATE GOVT FORCED TO CONCEDE DEMANDS

- J P Gavit

The AIKS in Maharashtra began the third Kisan Long March from Dindori in Nashik district to Mumbai on March 12, 2023, on a 15-point charter of demands. It was withdrawn at Vasind in Thane district six days later on March 18, after the state government conceded many of the major demands in writing and the Chief Minister placed the agreement with the AIKS before the state assembly on March 17. (See separate box for demands conceded by government.)



## THREE KISAN LONG MARCHES

This was the third Kisan Long March in Maharashtra led by the AIKS. The first and the most effective was the one from Nashik to Mumbai, which lasted full seven days from March 6-12, 2018. The second lasted only two days, from February 20-21, 2019 in Nashik tehsil, because three Ministers of the state government gave written assurances to the AIKS on the second day of the march. The third lasted six days from March 12-18, 2023, from Dindori to Vasind.

While there was a preparatory time of at least three weeks for the first two marches, the third began with less than a week's preparation, because of the circumstances. Onion prices for farmers had plummeted suddenly; an immediate response was

necessary; and the state assembly was due to end in the third week of March. The shortage of time naturally reflected in the strength of the march. While the first Kisan Long March of 2018 began at Nashik with 25,000 peasants and culminated in Mumbai with 50,000 peasants, the third Kisan Long March began at Dindori with 10,000 peasants and culminated at Vasind with 15,000 peasants. But it raised burning peasant issues at the right time and received very good media publicity.

In all the three Long Marches, the lion's share of the mobilisation was Adivasi peasants from Nashik district, followed by Adivasi peasants from Thane-Palghar and Ahmednagar districts. There was also representation of non-Adivasi peasants from the above four districts, plus from several districts of Vidarbha, Marathwada and Western Maharashtra regions, especially in the first two marches. In the third march, as mentioned above, time for preparation fell short. Adivasi peasant women



and youth participated in large numbers in all three marches.

### **COMING OF THE RED STORM**

By March 12 night the marchers from various tehsils of Nashik district, and from other districts of Maharashtra gathered at the Mhasrul Maidan just outside Nashik city. On March 13 morning, amidst great enthusiasm they marched into Nashik city. The march was replete with thousands of red caps, red placards, red flags, and red banners. Marathi banner headlines in the media hailed the coming of the “Laal Vaadal” (Red Storm). At the Dindori Chowk the peasants threw onions, tomatoes, brinjals, potatoes and other vegetables on the road in anger at the falling prices of all these items. The media captured those memorable moments.

On March 13 and 14, the Kisan Long March walked along the Agra-Nashik-Mumbai National Highway through Nashik district and reached the scenic spot of Ghatandevi near Igatpuri at night. After walking the whole day in the scorching sun, it was amazing that the Adivasi peasant women and men still had the energy to sing and dance the collective tribal dances till late night. Their anger against the government and the system was seen with every step.

On the morning of March 15, the Kisan Long March descended down the famous serpentine Kasara Ghat, with high hills on one side and deep valleys on the other. The march now left Nashik district and entered Thane district. Beautifully stunning photos of the March were taken here by the electronic and print mainstream media and they soon reached all parts of the country. All sections of the social media did even better. By March 16, the

marchers reached the Idgah Maidan at Vasind in Thane district, three days by walk from Mumbai.

### **NEGOTIATIONS WITH STATE GOVT.**

Due to the past experience of the amazing popular and political support that the 2018 Kisan Long March had received, the Shinde-Fadnavis state government was naturally nervous. On the night of March 12 itself, a senior state Minister Dada Bhuse held a preliminary meeting with an AIKS delegation at Nashik. CM Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis declared that they, along with concerned Ministers, will meet an AIKS delegation on March 14 at 3 pm in the State Assembly premises. On March 14, a statewide strike of lakhs of state government employees and teachers began, for the old pension scheme and other demands. The state government suddenly postponed the March 14 meeting with the AIKS to March 15.

The AIKS responded by marching further towards Mumbai, refusing to go for the March 15 talks, and demanding that state Ministers come to negotiate with the marchers. Eventually, two Ministers Dada Bhuse and Atul Save came to meet the marchers, held discussions and requested the AIKS leadership to come to the State Assembly premises on March 16 afternoon for full discussions with the CM, deputy CM, and other concerned Ministers and officials. While agreeing to go for the talks, the AIKS made it clear that the Kisan Long March will continue on its route to Mumbai until a satisfactory agreement is reached.

On March 16, at the invitation of the CM and Deputy CM of Maharashtra, a 16-member AIKS delegation held a two and a half hour



discussion with the State Government in the State Assembly premises in Mumbai. For this discussion 6 other concerned Ministers, the Chief Secretary, and several Secretaries of related departments were present. Among those in the AIKS delegation that met the State Govt were J P Gavit, ex-MLA, Dr Ashok Dhawale, Dr Ajit Nawale, Dr Uday Narkar, Vinod Nikole, MLA, Dr D L Karad, Umesh Deshmukh, Subhash Choudhary, Irfan Shaikh, Arjun Adey, Kiran Gahala, Mohan Jadhav, Ramesh Choudhary, Indrajit Gavit, Hiranman Gavit and Manjula Bangal. The talks ended on a positive note, with the State Govt acceding to most of the 15-point Charter of Demands of the farmers.

But the AIKS refused to withdraw the Kisan Long March and decided to sit-in at Vasind, district Thane till such time as the Minutes of the decisions of this meeting were not placed on the table of the State Assembly and instructions about their implementation were not sent out to all district officials. In the face of such a resolute decision by the AIKS, the

Chief Minister was forced on March 17 to announce all the decisions in the Legislative Assembly in a 15-minute address. On March 18, the AIKS received an official copy of the decisions and the Government also issued the same to all the district and lower authorities. In the wake of this significant victory, the third Kisan Long March was withdrawn on March 18, after six days.

A tragic incident occurred on the second last day of the March. A farmer who had walked in the march right from the beginning, called Pundalik Ambadas Jadhav, age 58, Village Mavdi, Tehsil Dindori, Dist Nashik, died of illness in a government hospital at Shahapur in Thane district, where he had been admitted. This was a great shock. J P Gavit immediately demanded compensation from the state government. The CM had to announce Rs 5 lakh as ex gratia payment to the family.

### **CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE AIKS**

The AIKS Centre congratulated the farmers of Maharashtra for the victorious third Kisan Long March. It concluded its statement by saying, “The AIKS-led Kisan Long March in 2018 had caught the imagination of the people and had instilled confidence in all democratic sections by forcing the then BJP-led State Government to accept almost all demands. In 2023, yet again the poor peasants, a large number of them Adivasis, with women leading from the front, have forced the SS-BJP to bow down and accept the demands. This victory will inspire militant struggles against the anti-people BJP Government and its pro-corporate policies. Coming just a fortnight before the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally at Delhi, it will also inspire the working class and the peasantry to come out in bigger numbers in all forthcoming struggles.” □

## WHAT THE KISAN LONG MARCH ACHIEVED

*We give below in brief the demands won by the AIKS as a result of this Kisan Long March. This is based on the official Minutes of the meeting between the state government and the AIKS on March 16, 2023, which were placed on the table of the state assembly by the Chief Minister on March 17. One very significant aspect of this Kisan Long March was that, while taking up the burning demands of the peasantry and agricultural workers, it also took up some crucial demands of workers, employees, and unorganised scheme workers, and won some of them. This was a significant step in the direction of worker-peasant unity, which was widely noted.*

**1. Onion Prices:** Due to collapse in onion prices, the state government agreed to give a subsidy of Rs 350 per quintal for onions. A state level onion price advisory committee will be constituted. Since fluctuation of onion prices is a regular phenomenon that is connected with central government policies, a state delegation will soon meet central ministers to discuss a long-term solution to the problem.

**2. Forest Rights Act (FRA) Implementation:** Several problems still remain in FRA implementation. These are as follows: thousands of claims remaining pending, less area than that under cultivation granted in the claims, not getting benefit of government schemes, and so on. For settling all these problems, a committee of concerned ministers will be set up, it will include J P Gavit, ex-MLA, and Vinod Nikole, MLA, and it will submit its report within one month. On the basis of this report, immediate action will be taken for vesting land in the names of Adivasi peasants.

**3. Temple (Devasthan) and Waqf Board Lands:** The government will make a law to vest temple lands in the name of the cultivating peasants, and this will be placed soon before the Cabinet. The decision of the Supreme Court as regards Waqf Board lands will be studied and it will be sent to all district collectors for clarification. Both these types involve lakhs of acres of land throughout the state, which are cultivated by peasants, but have not been vested in their names for generations.

**4. Provide Electricity Supply for 12 hours constantly and Waive the pending Electricity**

**Bills of Peasants:** Under the CM Solar Agricultural Scheme, electricity projects will be started on a priority basis in the Adivasi areas. A 120 KV subcentre at Kanashi in Kalwan tehsil will be set up with adequate funds.

**5. Loan Waiver:** In the case of over 88,000 peasants in Adivasi areas who have not received the benefit of the two earlier loan waiver schemes, named after Chhatrapati Shivaji and Mahatma Phule respectively, they will be given a loan waiver.

**6. Old Pension Scheme:** A committee has been set up to make a comparative study of the old pension scheme and the national pension scheme. It will discuss with all the stake-holders and submit its report within three months. On the basis of this report appropriate action will be taken.

**7. Increase in PM Housing Scheme Subsidy from Rs 1.40 lakh to Rs 5.00 lakh due to price rise, a re-survey of poor beneficiaries and their inclusion in the 'D' lists:** Discussion will be held with the Employment Guarantee Department so that extra fund with MNREGA can be made available for this housing subsidy. The eligible beneficiaries who do not find a place in the 'D' list of the Centre will be accommodated in the housing scheme of the state government. Under the Shabari, Pardhi and Aadim Awaas schemes, 1 lakh new houses will be built. For building houses for workers, more subsidy will be given from the Workers' Welfare Fund.

**8. Declaring all Scheme Workers as Government Employees with Government Pay Scales:** The monthly honorarium for scheme

workers has been increased as follows: Anganwadi worker – Rs 8,325 to Rs 10,000; Mini Anganwadi worker – Rs 5,975 to Rs 7,200; Anganwadi helper – Rs 4,425 to Rs 5,500. Also, 20,000 vacant posts of Anganwadi workers and helpers will be filled. Asha workers and block facilitators will be given a raise from the state government of Rs 1500 per month. Thus, a block facilitator will now receive Rs 14,975 instead of Rs 13,475 earlier. And an Asha worker will now receive Rs 6,500 instead of Rs 5,000 earlier. As regards pension and gratuity for Anganwadi workers and helpers, the Law and Justice Department will study all the Court decisions and will ensure their proper implementation. Arrangements will be made to send the wages of contract workers directly into their bank accounts, instead of them being arbitrarily cut by the contractors. Vacant posts in various workers welfare boards and tripartite committees will be filled and they will function with their full strength.

**9. Compensation by NDRF for Crop Loss due to Unseasonal Rains and Stop of Loot of Farmers by Crop Insurance Companies:** At present compensation is paid to farmers in case of unseasonal rains. For constant rain, criteria for compensation are being decided. To get the Crop Insurance compensation in Beed district for 2020, the state government will send a proposal to the central government.

**10. State Government should begin purchase of the Bal Hirda crop at Rs 250 per Kg. Adequate compensation be given for the destruction of the Bal Hirda crop due to cyclone in 2020:** The Maharashtra Adivasi Development Corporation used to purchase Bal Hirda earlier, but it stopped doing so in 2017 due to losses. The issue will be reopened and studied again, and an appropriate decision will be taken. The professional training centres were being run by the Adivasi Development Department through the Central Government-sponsored scheme. Now this scheme has stopped. An effort will be made to re-start these centres through the skill development department of

the state government.

**11. Cancel the River Linking Scheme and divert excess water flowing to the west into the Arabian Sea, to the east of drought-prone areas of Nashik district, Khandesh and Marathwada:**

This scheme has already been announced in the latest budget of the State Government. Irrigation schemes in Surgana and Kalwan tehsils were accepted and work on them was directed to begin.

**12. Thousands of bogus Adivasis have wrongly cornered ST reserved jobs by producing false caste certificates. Remove them from their jobs, replace them with genuine Adivasis, and fill all ST/SC vacant posts:** All such cases of bogus Adivasis have been dealt with, they have been removed and the posts made vacant. These posts will be properly filled by genuine Adivasis within the next three months.

**13. Increase in Old Age and other Pensions:** The sum for the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Scheme and the Shravan Bal Scheme has been increased from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500 per month.

**14. Along with the free grain given on ration cards, re-start the grain that was earlier available for sale:** A request to this effect will be made to the central government. Instructions will be given to all districts about giving yellow ration cards to families who have divided their cards. There are many problems on this score for many years.

**15. An independent machinery should be erected to examine the milkometres and weight scales, with appointment of milkometre inspectors. Implement the policy of FRP and Revenue Sharing for milk:** To stop the loot of milk peasants, standard milkometres will be insisted upon and priority will be given to appoint independent inspectors to examine milkometres. In the present situation, the state government has no control over private milk bodies. A meeting will be held with those concerned and an appropriate decision will be taken to establish such control of the state government over the private milk sector. □

# MASSIVE AIKS STATEWIDE MARCH FROM AKOLE FORCES STATE GOVT TO BEND AGAIN

- Ajit Nawale

The All India Kisan Sabha's (AIKS) Maharashtra State Council once again took the lead to begin a massive three-day march of over 15,000 farmers from 17 districts of the state, from Akole to Loni in the Ahmednagar district of Western Maharashtra, on April 26, 2023. The march was to culminate at the Loni office of the Revenue and Dairy Development Minister of Maharashtra, Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil of the BJP. If the demands were not met, the AIKS had announced that an indefinite Mahapadav would be conducted at Loni.

Realising that such a large peasant mass reaching Loni, the town of the State Revenue Minister, and conducting a Mahapadav there, would discredit the state government no end, three Ministers specified by the AIKS descended on Sangamner in the same district (near where the marchers had camped the previous night) on April 27 afternoon to hold talks.

## HISTORICAL LEGACY OF AKOLE

It may be recalled that Akole tehsil, and in fact Ahmednagar district, were in the forefront of the bitter anti-imperialist freedom struggle in Maharashtra. Ragoji Bhangre and other prominent Adivasi peasant fighters from this tehsil fought the British tooth and nail, and were martyred through hanging. Akole

tehsil and Ahmednagar district were also till the 1960s in the forefront of the Communist movement in Maharashtra and its valiant struggles. However, the scourge of revisionism took a very big toll of the Communist movement in this district.

Buwa Nawale of Akole was elected the first President of the Maharashtra Rajya Kisan Sabha at its foundation conference at Titwala in Thane district on January 7, 1945. Shamrao Parulekar was elected General Secretary and Godavari Parulekar was elected one of the Joint Secretaries in that same conference. From 2000 onwards, work of the Left began newly and with vigour in Akole, Sangamner and adjoining tehsils, and it has been constantly growing. Akole has seen many big struggles of the peasantry and the working class since then. It has hosted two important state conferences – of the CPI(M) in 2012 and of the AIKS in 2022.

## STATEWIDE MOBILISATION

Unlike the earlier AIKS long marches in



Maharashtra, in which the lion's share of mobilisation was from Nashik district, the lion's share of mobilisation in this Akole March was from Thane-Palghar (over 8,000 peasants had come by trucks and tempos from a distance of over 225 Km) and Ahmednagar (over 3000 peasants and workers) districts.

Districts like Nashik, Pune, Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara and Solapur in Western Maharashtra, Beed, Parbhani, Nanded, Jalna and Aurangabad in Marathwada, and Amravati, Buldana, Wardha in Vidarbha were also well represented.

A large proportion of the marchers were Adivasi peasant women and men from Thane-Palghar, Ahmednagar, Nashik, Pune, Nanded, Buldana, and some other districts. For them land rights was a vital issue. But the marchers this time also included a large number of non-Adivasi farmers from Vidarbha, Marathwada and Western Maharashtra regions. Significantly, this march had thousands of women and youth. The CITU, AIAWU, AIDWA, DYFI and SFI were also represented by some of their state and district leaders.

Carrying innumerable red flags of the AIKS and some of the CITU, they marched with red caps, red badges and red placards, giving resounding slogans around their demands, and castigating the corrupt and discredited BJP-led state government. After walking a distance of around 12 Km, the march halted for the night at Dhandarfal village in Sangamner tehsil.

A large public meeting was held at Akole to begin the march. It was presided over by AIKS President Dr Ashok Dhawale; it was inaugurated by renowned journalist P Sainath who himself walked all the way with the farmers; and it was addressed by the eminent

economist Dr R Ramakumar, AIKS Joint Secretary Badal Saroj, AIKS state vice presidents J P Gavit, ex- MLA, and Dr Uday Narkar, AIDWA General Secretary Mariam Dhawale, CITU Vice President Dr D L Karad and State Secretary Vinod Nikole, MLA. AIKS State Secretary Dr Ajit Nawale welcomed the gathering and State President Umesh Deshmukh gave the vote of thanks.

### **NEGOTIATIONS AND VICTORY**

On April 25, the day before the march began, Revenue Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, on whose office at Loni this march was to culminate, invited an AIKS delegation for talks at the Sahyadri State Guest House in Mumbai. While some progress was made in the discussion as regards his Revenue and Dairy Development departments, no other Minister concerned with the issues raised by this march was present. That is why the AIKS decided to go ahead with this march, despite pleas from the BJP-led state government to call it off.

It was under this pressure that, on the second day of the march on April 27, Revenue and Dairy Development Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, Tribal Development Minister Vijaykumar Gavit, and Labour Minister Suresh Khade held talks with the AIKS delegation that was led by Dr Ashok Dhawale, Dr Ajit Nawale, Umesh Deshmukh, Kisan Gujar and all AIKS state office-bearers, Dr D L Karad of CITU, and selected leaders from Ahmednagar district.

The talks lasted three hours, and all three Ministers conceded most of the major demands of the AIKS. As per the insistence of the AIKS, it was agreed that the written minutes of the talks with the government on April 25

and 27 will be given very soon; and all the three Ministers will come to Dhandarfal village, address the marchers, and publicly declare which demands they have conceded.

Accordingly, a huge victorious public meeting was held on the evening of April 27. It was presided over by Dr Ashok Dhawale, and was addressed by Badal Saroj, Dr Ajit Nawale, and by all three Ministers. AIKS leaders stressed that this victory was achieved only through sustained struggle, and underlined the need to strengthen the AIKS manifold. The march was then declared to be suspended amidst resounding slogans. Thousands of farmers went back to their districts with a great sense of victory and achievement.

### **WHAT THE MARCH ACHIEVED**

The demands of this march that the state government had to concede after two rounds of talks on April 25 and 27 were as follows:

**Implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA):** As a result of a 50,000-strong statewide gherao of the house of the then Tribal Development Minister by the AIKS at Wada in Palghar district in October 2016, a full meeting of the concerned state government ministers and officials with the AIKS was held, and a special Government Circular dated November 11, 2016 was issued. It dealt comprehensively with all the big deficiencies and weaknesses in the implementation of the FRA, and laid down clear directives for improvement which the AIKS had proposed in that meeting. However, that circular was never



sincerely implemented. It was decided in the meeting with three ministers on April 27 that this circular will henceforth be the main basis for stringent FRA implementation. That will take care of the chronic problems in FRA implementation, like the notoriously negative interference of the Forest Department and the Revenue Department, wrong rejection of claims, claims pending for long, giving much less land than what is actually being cultivated by tribals for generations, wrong interpretation of FRA provisions so far as non-tribals are concerned, and so on.

**Temple Trust, Inam, Waqf Board Lands:** This is another serious and chronic issue in Maharashtra, with lakhs of acres of lands in the names of the above bodies, which are being cultivated for generations by poor and middle peasants, but are not in the names of the cultivating peasants. Lands not being in the peasants' names means that they are not eligible for bank or cooperative society credit, or for any of the government schemes. It was decided that the state government would bring in legislation to ensure that these lands are vested in the names of the cultivating peasants; a copy of this draft bill would be given in advance to the AIKS for its suggestions; wherever the names of such tenant farmers have

been removed from the land records, they would be restored as before; these peasants would get compensation from the government for natural calamities; and all lands that have been illegally transferred from tribals' names to names of non-tribals, will be restored to tribals.

**'Varkas' Lands:** This is a serious problem in Palghar district which arose after the famed Warli Adivasi Revolt of 1945-47. The revolt was so powerful that it swept away the landlords from their lands, which were again regained by the Adivasis, to whom they had originally belonged in the first place. But while thousands of acres of these lands came into possession of, and began to be cultivated by, the Adivasi peasants, land records kept showing the landlords as the land owners. When these absentee landlords sold these lands, it was they who got the money, while the cultivating peasants were driven out. An important decision was taken to vest these lands in the name of the cultivating peasants, and the legal methodology of doing this was worked out.

**Regularising Housing Encroachments on Government Lands:** It was decided to regularise encroachments made for housing on government lands. Many other important decisions were taken on various other land-related issues, with which both the Revenue Ministry and the Tribal Development Ministry were jointly concerned.

**Government Procurement of Hirda Crop and Crop Loss Compensation:** The Adivasi Development Board will positively consider procuring the Hirda crop at proper prices. In the 2020 cyclone, the Hirda crop was destroyed but compensation was denied to the peasants. This compensation will be immediately given to thousands of peasants.

**Issues Concerning Milk:** On issues such as FRP and revenue sharing for milk, and government milk policy to regulate private milk producers, a committee will be set up with the Dairy Development Minister as Chairman. Two representatives of the AIKS will be included in this committee. An early decision will be taken by speeding up this committee's work.

**Construction Workers:** For construction workers a Family Mediclaim Scheme will be started at the earliest. A positive decision will be taken to increase their housing subsidy from the present Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh per worker. Cumbersome conditions for the housing scheme will be removed. Some of the present wasteful schemes will be replaced by useful ones and the funds will be reallocated accordingly. Pension and Diwali subsidy will be considered.

**Scheme Workers:** The arrears of honorarium due to all scheme workers will be cleared at the earliest. As regards making scheme workers regular government employees, constant follow-up will be made with the central government. As regards all other pending issues of scheme workers, the government will take positive steps.

**Debt Relief, Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation, Land Registration, Natural Calamities and Assistance, Remunerative Prices for Farm Produce, Electricity, Housing, Ration, Irrigation:** On all these issues, the decisions of the AIKS meeting with the Revenue Minister on April 25, 2023 and the decisions of the AIKS meeting with the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister on March 16, 2023 after the Dindori to Vasind March, shall be implemented.

□



## MEWAT BLEEDS AGAIN, STAND WITH MEO PEASANTS

- Shubhojeet Dey

The shroud of uncertainty had barely lifted from the environs of Ghatmeeka, where few days ago a young man named Waris was allegedly lynched by cow vigilantes, when the news of the brutal murders of Junaid (35) and Nasir (25) shook the Meo village on February 16. Three abductions and killings within a fortnight, allegedly at the hand of the same outfit led by a local upstart popularly known as Monu Manesar, has once again brought forth the reality of being Muslim and poor in New India.

A spate of lynchings has marred the region of Mewat (remember Pehlu Khan?) for some years now. Mewat region is home to the Meo people which is a predominantly Muslim peasant community. Ghatmeeka village itself is only 90 kilometres from India's IT Hub, Gurugram. Despite this proximity to centres of wealth and power, Mewat (now called Nuh) is officially India's most backward district on different indicators such as health, education, infrastructure, etc.

While the village is technically in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district (Mewat is a contiguous area that covers parts of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh), for all that matters to people and their livelihoods, Ghatmeeka mirrors the striking backwardness of all of Mewat: poor/absent roads, kutcha houses, a dearth of schools and primary healthcare facilities, and farmers with marginal holdings. So when we, as the delegation from All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and All India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU), visited Junaid and Nasir's homes here, it was clear to us how thoroughly difficult it was going to be for their kin to carry on with their lives in Mewat. The delegation comprised of AIKS General Secretary Vijoo Krishnan, AIAWU Joint Secretary Vikram Singh, AIKS Finance Secretary P Krishnaprasad, AIKS Vice President Inderjit Singh, Rajasthan Kisan Sabha Joint Secretary Sanjay Madhav, senior leader of CITU Haryana Satbir Singh, Shubhojeet Dey from PS Trust, Kale Khan Sarpanch and Akhtar Hussain.



With the villagers huddling around us as we sat on two charpoys in the *baithak* of Junaid's humble one-storeyed house of plain brick and mortar, we met his first cousin, Mohd Yousuf. Yousuf shared how deep the fear of Monu Manesar and his ilk runs through the village. "Forget about adults, even children are picked up by him and are only returned for a ransom of Rs 50-60,000," he told us.

"Junaid's parents are long dead. He was the sole earner in the family that includes 13 children, 6 of his own and the rest of his elder brother Zafar who is mentally-ill and is unable to work. For the last five years, he was running a grocery shop in the village. His family owns 10 *biswas* of land [half a bigha or one-twelfth of an acre] and they grow no surplus foodgrains which can be sold in the market," Yousuf informed us.

Not ten steps from the house is Junaid's *kirana* shop. Its closed shutter screams of his absence, an unbounded one as he will never return. "We are chased away from police stations; no one listens to us. Rajasthan police has still cooperated with us, but since the murders took place in Haryana, it is essential that the state police there act. But they are sitting on the matter even as the killers roam free," Yousuf added.

After every lynching, despite its apparent regularity, the community finds itself astonished. They wonder why they are being targeted. Even by a stretch of imagination it will be hard to claim here that the Meo Muslims here hold any spite for Hindus. Indeed, the sarpanch of the village is a Hindu - Avtar Singh - and he has been elected four consecutive times by the majority Muslim population here. This has been so despite a

number of Muslim candidates in the fray. The Bajrang Dal, of which Monu Manesar is a proud member, operates on the false pretext of cow smuggling as there is no genuine enmity between Hindus and Muslims here. The pretext is highly effective as Meos are traditionally skilled dairy farmers and almost every household owns cattle. So it's easy for the mob to attack Meos transporting their cattle, even if they might just be taking the bovine to the veterinarian for treatment.

Down the broken alleys, near the fields where the village grows its Rabi wheat crop, we found Nasir's house - a tiny room which he shared with his wife Parmina - in a compound that also houses his two elder brothers and their families. The brothers spoke in a low-voice, still reeling through the shock of losing their sibling, and narrated the events of February 15-16. It was an unremarkable day. Nasir, who was a truck driver by profession, borrowed a neighbour's Bolero pickup to drive his friend Junaid to Haryana where the latter was to meet the family of a prospective bride. Recall that Junaid has an elder brother, Zafar, who was mentally disabled; it was for his son that Junaid left for Haryana, calling a favour from his friend Nasir. On their way back, they were intercepted allegedly by Monu Manesar's vigilante gang, abducted, beaten till they were grievously injured and then taken to Firozpur Jhirka police station. Here, betraying all official procedures and certainly breaking the moral compass, Haryana police refused to shelter Junaid and Nasir. The gang then proceeded to take the duo to Bhiwani, locked them up in the Bolero, and burnt the vehicle to ashes.

This tragedy indeed appears like the theatre of the absurd: Junaid and Nasir were kidnapped



on the suspicion of smuggling cows even though they were actually returning from a social visit. Neither Junaid nor Nasir happen to even rear cows for income. One wonders where the holy cow enters the picture? The possible answer is, however, and this was highlighted to us by Meos both inside and outside the village, that Monu Manesar is running an organised crime operation, where he first creates a self-image of being the saviour of cows through his widely popular YouTube channel, and with the support and impunity thus gained, he forcefully takes cattle away from Meos, only to smuggle them himself, either to the market for sale or to butchers! Junaid and Nasir's brutal murder was part of his propaganda campaign to spread fear amongst Meo dairy farmers. Only that this time national media gave its long due attention to the matter, resulting in him becoming "untraceable", as Haryana's rather capable police would like to call it.

AIKS handed over a cheque of Rs 1 lakh each to Sajida and Parmina, wives of Junaid and Nasir as a preliminary support to the two families. No compensation had yet been given

to the families either from the Congress-led Rajasthan government or the BJP-led Haryana government. AIKS had visited earlier when Pehlu Khan was lynched and also when Rakbar Khan as well as Ummar Khan were killed. Ummar Khan also belonged to the same village as Junaid and Nasir. His young son Vikram Khan recognised us, came forward and expressed the helplessness faced by the villagers.

The Meos feel cornered, not just by local right-wing vigilantes, but also by public perception in general. Much has been written derisively about the "lawlessness" of Mewat, how every youth in the district owns an illegal gun, and so on. The media has facilitated these stereotypes with its own poisonous rhetoric. So when our delegation asked the villagers to challenge such attacks and mobilise for a Mahapanchayat for communal peace, they responded positively but asked AIKS and AIAWU to send their national leadership to participate in the program. This would bring them confidence, the locals said. As we have consistently stood by the Meo community, we extended our full support once again. □

# JAMMU AND KASHMIR FARMERS PROTEST AGAINST FORCIBLE EVICTION FROM LAND BY BULLDOZERS

- Zahoor Ahmad



A Kisan Protest Dharna was held at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, on February 24, 2023, by the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Tehreek (JKKT). The Kisan Dharna was organized against the forceful eviction of Jammu and Kashmir farmers using the Land Eviction Order, of 2020. Farmers from Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, and UP participated in the Dharna.

Sitaram Yechury, General Secretary of CPIM, Vijoo Krishnan, General Secretary of AIKS, Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami, Central Committee Member of CPIM, P Krishnaprasad, Finance Secretary of AIKS, Inderjit Singh, Vice President of AIKS, Zahoor Ahmad, General Secretary of JKKT, Kishore Kumar, Jammu Region Secretary of JKKT, B Venkat, General Secretary of All India Agricultural Workers Union(AIAWU), Vikram Singh, Joint Secretary of AIAWU, Sumit Dalal, Secretary of Haryana AIKS, Maimoona Mollah, President of All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) Delhi, Mayukh Biswas, General Secretary of Student Federation of India (SFI) and Aishe Ghosh, President of JNUSU addressed the gathering.

Before this, on February 2, Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Tehreek activists held a protest demonstration in Srinagar. Hundreds of activists assembled at Press Enclave, Srinagar, and took out a rally up to Ghanta Ghar Lal Chowk, where they chanted slogans against the administration's forcible land evictions of poor kisans in J&K. A similar demonstration was held at Kathua in the Jammu region, where activists took out a rally.

The Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha and his administration are on an eviction spree using bulldozers against hundreds of poor farmers and petty producers in various districts, who are being forcibly evicted from their homes and cultivating land using the pretext of a revenue order, claiming to retrieve government land from 'illegal occupants'.

The farmers are protesting across J&K. Various political parties, including the National Conference, the PDP, the Indian National Congress, and the CPI (M), among others, have supported the struggle. The farmers' organisations are demanding the



Manoj Sinha administration stop such actions that are detrimental to the farmers and landless people residing in villages as petty producers, who are dependent on state land that they have been occupying for decades.

The Revenue Department has submitted a list of encroachments measuring more than 20 lakhs Kanals (one-eighth of an acre) of land to the Hon'ble High Court of J&K. The encroachments, as per the revenue administration, range from 3 Marlas (half a Kanal) to large chunks of land. The encroachments are not new; they took place during the regime of the Dogra Rulers and have continued even after independence to date. Thus, the present administration under the Lt. Governor's leadership branding the present occupants as land grabbers is unjustified and downright misleading. Even the Supreme Court order observed that those with uninterrupted adverse possession of more than 30 years on state land may have accrued the rights for regularisation.

There are several government orders and notifications from 1924 to date that recognizes the rights of occupants on government land. J&K's people have a troubled history of the partition and related migrations, and people were helped by the then administration in Jammu and Kashmir to settle down on government land and also provided with schemes such as 'Grow More Food' to encourage them to cultivate government land. Many generations have been living in such lands and cultivating them to support their livelihood.

These settlements need to be regularized, and the land rights of these farmers should be protected by the administration. Instead, the Lt. Governor is adhering to the tyrannical rule of using bulldozers to evict the poor people from the land even without paying any compensation. Such illegal actions cannot be tolerated by the farmers or the people in general. The struggle will intensify in the days to come.

AIKS demands the Union Government intervene and protect the rights of the farmers in Jammu and Kashmir over their land and livelihood.

1. Issue directions to the Lt. Governor and the administration for preventing any adverse action detrimental to the farmers and landless people residing in villages as petty farmers and those landless who are wholly and solely dependent on the state land they have been occupying for decades.
2. The inhabitants residing in the area and possessing state land right from 1947/1957 to date shall not be disturbed. A proper mechanism must be adopted to regularize their holdings per prior government orders.
3. The land and the houses constructed thereon by those who have purchased land from old occupants may kindly be regularized.
4. The orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in which it is ordered that those having uninterrupted adverse possession of more than 30 years on state land may have accrued the rights for regularization. □

# APPLE GROWERS PROTEST AGAINST ANTI-HORTICULTURE POLICIES OF UNION GOVERNMENT

-Sohan Singh Thakur



In a first-of-its-kind demonstration, about 500 apple growers from the three-core apple-producing states of India - Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand - held a one-day protest at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar on April 4, 2023, to denounce the anti-horticulture policies of the Union government. These policies have enabled large agribusiness corporate houses to make huge profits while the growers face a decline in their incomes.

The demonstration was addressed by Rakesh Singha (Ex MLA), Sohan Singh Thakur (HP), Puran Thakur (HP), Dr Kuldeep Tanwar (HP), Sanjay Chauhan (former Mayor Shimla city), Dr Kuldeep Tanwar (HP), Zahoor Ahmad Rather (JK), Abdul Rashid Pandit (JK), Mohd Shah

Budgam (JK), Gangadhar Nautiyal (Uttarakhand) and others.

The leadership of All India Kisan Sabha, Vijoo Krishnan (General Secretary), Dr Ashok Dhawale (President), Hannan Mollah (Vice President), and P Krishnaprasad (Finance Secretary) extended solidarity to the demonstration. Vikram Singh (Joint Secretary, AIAWU) and Mariam Dhawale (General Secretary, AIDWA) also extended their greetings.

The apple growers, divided by state boundaries but united in their effort to save the Apple Economy, presented a 9-point Charter of Demands during the demonstration. One of the major demand was the withdrawal of eviction orders that

had been served to farmers in J&K by the administration of Lt Governor Manoj Sinha. The Forest Department in Himachal Pradesh has also been sending out such draconian eviction notices in recent years. Along with this, the demand for remunerative prices for A, B and C grade apples as well as revival for Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) was kept forth.

Other than this, the following demands have been set forth by apple growers under the banner of AFFI:

1. Set Genuine Freight Charges in J&K.
2. Declare Apple's Profitable Value.
3. Impose 100% Import Duty on Apple.
4. Mandate Universal Carton for Packaging.
5. Provide Fertilisers, Cartons at Cheap Rates to Farmers.
6. Remove GST on All Products Connected

to Apple.

7. Import Only Tested Varieties of Apple.

8. Regulate Private Controlled Atmosphere (CA) Stores.

It is worth noting that an AFFI delegation had submitted a detailed memorandum to the Union Minister of Agriculture, Sh. Narendra Singh Tomar on July 28, 2022, outlining the aforementioned demands. However, despite the submission of the memorandum, the Minister failed to take action, and as a result, the apple economy suffered a setback due to market conditions and climatic aberrations during the marketing season of 2022.

AFFI has resolved to build an organized movement against the anti-farmer and anti-horticultural policies of the Union government, with the slogan of 'Save Apple Economy, Save Apple Farmers'. □



# SUGARCANE FARMERS PROTEST IN DELHI

- N K Shukla



Under the banner of the All India Sugarcane Farmers Federation (AISFF), hundreds of sugarcane farmers from all major sugarcane producing states staged a protest dharna at Jantar Mantar in Delhi today.

Strongly opposing the anti-farmer policies of the BJP led Union government, sugarcane farmers from Tamilnadu, UP, Maharashtra, Bihar, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttrakhand and Madhya Pradesh unitedly raised the burning issue of rising input costs for sugarcane cultivation and demanded Rs.5,00 / quintal (Rs.5,000/ ton) as the price of the sugarcane at 9.5% recovery. Another important issue related to the arrears of sugarcane farmers was highlighted and a concrete demand was raised that all arrears should be paid to the farmers immediately.

AISFF president D Raveendran presided over the dharna. All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS)

leaders, General Secretary Vijoo Krishnan, Vice President Hannan Mollah and finance secretary P Krishnaprasad while addressing the assembly of the farmers sitting on dharna underlined the need to expand and strengthen the AISFF. AISFF's state leaders, Prabhuraj Narayan Rao (Bihar) Kari Appa Rao (AP), Ram Babu (Telangana) , Yashwant (Karnataka), Balwan Singh (Haryana), Babu Ram Yadav (UP), Umesh Deshmukh (Maharashtra), Kamaruddin (Uttrakhand), Murari Lal Dhakad (MP) and Vel Maran from Tamil Nadu also addressed the protest dharna. AISFF's General Secretary delivered the concluding speech.

A memorandum containing major demands of sugar cane farmers was submitted to the honourable minister for agriculture, Government of India. Attached herewith is a copy of the memorandum.





### **Charter of Demands**

1) All India Sugarcane Farmers' Federation demands Rs. 500/-per quintal (5000/- per ton) as the price of Sugarcane/FRP at 9.5% recovery for season 2022-23

2) All State Governments be asked to declare and issue

State Advised Price (SAP) every year before the planting season begins.

3) Reduce the price of inputs.

4) Payment of price of sugarcane supplied to the mills be made to the farmers within 14 days, according to 1966 Sugar Control Order. All the arrears be paid to sugarcane farmers immediately.

5) Profit from byproducts like press mud, bagasse, ethanol etc. be shared with farmers.

6) Closed sugar mills be opened and their assets and land must not be used for other purposes. Ethanol production be increased by increasing sugar production.

7) Cooperative and public sector sugar mills must not be privatised.

8) Most of the Cooperative and Public sector sugar Mills are heavily indebted. They have to pay huge amounts of interest every month for the loan. We request to the Union Government to provide interest free loan from Sugarcane Development Fund to the Cooperative and public sector sugar Mills.

9) The central government determines the quota every month for sugar mills to sell sugar which is at present is only 10- 15%. Its amount should be increased and mills should be allowed to sell up to 25%. So that the sugar mills are able to sell sugar and borrow money at interest and give it to the farmers.

10) Rangrajan Committee Report be rejected.

11) Assurances given to the farmers after last historic Kisan movement, be implemented immediately on MSP, Electricity Amendment Bill be withdrawn immediately, withdraw all cases instituted against farmers in last historic movement, compensation be paid to the families of more than 715 martyred farmers, Ajay Mishra Teni be sacked from Modi's Cabinet and justice be done to the martyr farmers of Lakhimpur Khiri. □

# AIKS LEADS POTATO FARMERS' MOVEMENT IN WEST BENGAL

- Biplab Majumdar

AIKS-West Bengal, at the behest of the potato growers in the state, called for a movement on the issue of price-crash which has caused widespread distress in the countryside. 11 March, 2023 was set as the date for staging a mass protest. On this day all the major national and state highways were blocked and the roads transformed into stage for the movement. Thousands of potato growers joined with large amounts of recently harvested potatoes at nearly 82 spots all over West Bengal. They demanded that remunerative price for the potato harvest must be ensured under government supervision, that they should get a minimum selling price of Rs 1000 per quintal for their produce. The reluctant state government had already sharply ignored the farmers' concerns. As a result, farmers found themselves under immense pressure. This unbearable situation was turning out to be unsustainable and formed the context for the protest called by AIKS-West Bengal.

Logic behind the demand of potato farmers being that, once the government starts buying potato at Rs 1000 per quintal, it will complementarily aid in raising the open market-prices. The erstwhile Left Front government had many a times adopted such pro-farmer price regulation policy in the past.

As part of the present movement, two open-mass conventions were held by AIKS-West Bengal- one in Hooghly district in South Bengal and another in Alipurduar in North Bengal. These conventions were attended by 3000 potato growers to plan a line of action and chalk out demands.

At these conventions, it was decided that to demand just and equitable potato prices, blockades would be organized on all the major state and national highways. During the protest, traffic on the highways was stopped and the roads were dumped with the newly harvested potato crop. The roads shone with the scattered





g o v e r n m e n t announced that it will purchase only 10 lakh tons of potato at just Rs 650 per quintal. Farmers have rejected this grossly anti-farmer stance of the state government and registered their protest with sending a strong rejoinder.

The situation in North Bengal was

potatoes glistening under the sun. There were efforts to communicate the farmers' issues to the public at several places, and gradually a wide solidarity was built. Hence, the farmers protest took the form of a mass movement, a wonderful achievement in itself. It became a protest action questioning role of the state-government.

somewhat different- where farmers faced brazen harassment at the hands of the cold storage owners and other administrative representatives. In many cases, farmers had to put up a bold fight while facing police atrocity, in order to acquire their legitimate space in the cold storages.

One needs to be reminded of how the TMC government mishandled a similar potato- price crisis in 2018. As a result of the short-sighted and callous policy of the state government then, potato farmers of West Bengal have already lost potential markets in other states, including Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand. According to the estimates of the department of agricultural marketing, West Bengal produces 120 lakh tons of potato on an average. However, maximum capacity of the existing cold storages is only 64 lakh tons, which in turn means that farmers are compelled to sell a substantial part of their production in the open market at much lower prices.

At the same time as the potato farmers' movement in West Bengal, the 20,000 strong and six-day long Kisan March of onion farmers, adivasis and others in Maharashtra has re-kindled the spirits of the farming community to wage higher forms of struggles.

At present after almost 12 days of state-wide farmers' agitation, the market price for potato is slowly rising day after day. In the third week of February, the field-price for potato was Rs. 500 per quintal. After a month-long movement, farm-level prices have gone up to Rs. 1000-1200 per quintal at the time of full harvest. Therefore, struggle of the farmers made the markets revise the prices, even if temporarily. Encouraged by the potato farmers' struggle, the onion growers of West Bengal have also come out with their own demands in many places.

Amidst the ongoing movement and in an effort to quell the protests, the state

Demands of the potato farmers' movement are:

- 1) Minimum selling price (for the farmers) must be Rs 1000 per quintal.
- 2) While the overall storage capacity is inadequate, potato growers must be given priority in the cold storages.
- 3) The government should buy potato directly from the farmers with a minimum support price.

4) The procurement and selling process must be guaranteed for all kinds of producers (contractual and others).

5) Potato supply to other states should be allowed and re-established.

6) The Central and State government must ensure a policy for setting up potato-based industries.

7) The situation is gravely serious and demands effective intervention immediately.

### **AIKS Uttar Pradesh Potato Farmers' Convention Passes Resolution on MSP for Potato**

AIKS- Uttar Pradesh state level convention of potato farmers was held in Mathura on 18 February, 2023. Uttar Pradesh contributes one third of the country's total potato production, however, due to the absence of any state or central level policy for potato marketing, farmers suffer huge losses. Since demonetization in 2016, there has been a considerable fall in potato prices, whereas the cost of cultivation has been rising.

Among the resolutions passed at the convention, demands for Minimum Support Price for potato, fixing of MSP at Swaminathan Commission formula of C2 costs +50 percent profit, opening up of

government procurement centers, forming cooperatives of potato farmers for assisting in purchase of inputs and carry out procurement along with other marketing services, were included. Issues such as establishing potato processing industries in the potato belt and demand for setting up potato-research centers was also discussed. Demands for expanding the cold-storage capacities and compensation policy for farmers suffering crop-damages in the cold storages were placed.

The convention elected a 14-member potato growers subcommittee of the state with Bharat Singh as convener and Digamber Singh as co-convener.



# FARMERS STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE - NH 716 B

- B. Thulasi Narayanan

Earlier, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change accorded environmental clearance for the construction of the six-lane Chittoor-Thatchur highway (NH-716B) of the National Highways Authority of India under Bharatmala Pariyojna, an umbrella scheme of the Union Government, at an estimated cost of 3197.56 crores, with a minimum of 32 hectares of Pulikundran Reserve Forest having to be cleared. The proposed 6-way lane of the National Highway 716-B project navigates through the agricultural land with highly fertile water resources and river and water body irrigation lands of Uthukottai Block and Pallipattu Block in Tiruvallur District of Tamil Nadu. The government decided to go ahead with the construction of the expressway project connecting the route from Thatchur in Tamil Nadu to Keenatampalli near Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh. It covers a total stretch of 116.3 km, which includes a distance of 45.3 km in Tamil Nadu and 59.700 km of land in the Chittoor and Tirupati districts of Andhra Pradesh.

In 2018, the official machinery led by the then-AIADMK government swung into action by issuing notifications informing the landholders regarding the acquisition of land. A project report and an Impact Assessment Report (EIA) were also prepared in support of the said project and submitted for a public hearing on July 5, 2019. Disagreeing with the outcome of the public hearing, several organizations and individuals decided to walk out of the meeting by expressing apprehensions and dissents over the proposed corridor. The Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam (TNKS-AIKS) deferred on two counts. The first reason cited was the top quality of the land which was bestowed with abundant water resources. Therefore, sacrificing land for the lowest price was not a wise option. Secondly, the rates offered by the government stand out as being abysmally low if one compares them with the prevailing market rates of

the adjoining places. The government had proposed far lesser prices than the rates prescribed some ten years before as the guideline values for the land came down by more than 10%, which was yet another shocking message for land losers. Therefore, the farmers stuck to their stand of bargaining at a much higher fair price for their lands. The agricultural land in question lies between the Kusasthalaiyar and the Araniar rivers. These non-perennial rivers pass parallelly to the northern and southern sides of the land and are considered highly productive for agricultural production. Up in arms against the acquisition of the fertile land, the farmers said that the land produces tons of paddy three seasons in a year and that the expressway project would also destroy several water bodies by harming the environment. The most shocking and intriguing findings for the farmers were those falsely observed in the union government's assessment report (EIA). It projected the cultivable land in a negative frame. The EIA stated that the land was barren and had never been made the most of by the farmers. That was a blatantly untrue statement stated in the EIA. The Assessment Report contradicts the state revenue records, which explicitly state that multi-crop, paddy-yielding land is cultivable. Enraged by the abuse of power and mockery, the farmers decided not to give up their struggle but to intensify it at the grassroots level. The Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam (TNVS)—affiliated with the All India Kisan Sabha—stood as a bulwark for the farmers, and the farmers carrying red flags prevented the officials from entering the land. Attempts by officials to come with a police escort with arms were unsuccessful. On September 22, 2002, a memorandum was submitted to the Thiruvallur district collector by 800 or so peasants under the leadership of the All India Joint Secretary of AIKS, D. Raveendran. Farmers' years of sustained struggle have resulted in this movement. Buoyed by the success, again in the next

month, on the 21st of April 2022, TNVS convened a preparatory meeting whose active participation led to a strong protest held by 1000 farmers on the 25th of April 2022 in Tiruvallur District Headquarters. In it, P. Shanmugam, K.P. Perumal, B. Thulasi Narayan, and district leaders have addressed the protest. Following that, on May 8, 2022, AIKS convened the “ Land Protection Conference” under the chairmanship of P. Shanmugam, in which political party leaders belonging to the CPI [M], CPI, INC, and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) expressed solidarity with the peasantry movement. As many as 480 delegates, the key representatives of TNVS, participated in the conference debate. The passing of resolutions at the conference had a positive impact on strengthening the movement. In June 2020, more than 30 villages raised black flags and registered their protest, and the voice of protest grew. Officials hesitated to enter the land. Efforts by the agricultural community to employ 1,217 farmers have not yielded results for the ruling class. But at last, the voices of hundreds of villagers—the masters behind the series of struggles—were finally heard by the ruling class. Consequently, the Tiruvallur District Administration, vide letter dated June 1, 2022, extended an invitation to TNVS to resolve the matter. It arranged the meeting with the Hon’ble Minister for Dairy Development, Shri S.M. Nasar. Representing TNVS-AIKS, the leaders P. Shanmugam, B. Thulasi Narayanan, G. Sampath, and C. Perumal, along with farmer delegates, took part in the conciliation process, which ended with a four-phase negotiation. The Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam (TNVS-AIKS) and the District Administration agreed mutually, with the full approval of the farmers who also participated in the negotiation process. Finally, the district administration has agreed to provide relief through suitable compensation and makeshift arrangements.



The peace talks held between state officials and Kisan Sabha leaders under the chairmanship of the

district collector have been unanimously agreed upon as follows:

1. Compensation for the acquired farmland shall be calculated based on the guidelines and paid with an overall increase of 3.75 times, considering the guidelines as the base price.
2. Compensation for the loss of wells shall be paid based on the prevailing market rates.
3. Compensation for the loss of borewells shall be paid based on the prevailing market rates.
4. Replacement of the EB service connection shall be arranged promptly.
5. Compensation for the loss of pump sheds shall be paid based on the existing market rates.
6. Compensation for the loss of houses shall be paid based on the existing market rates.
7. Compensation shall be provided suitably for the loss of trees and shall be paid based on the prevailing market rates.
8. Installation of a dedicated pipeline for irrigation purposes shall be provided along the sides of the highway corridor.
9. The District Revenue Administration shall function as a single-window agency in expediting the process.

Having gained experience from our past struggles, we have to continue our political journey to fight for farmers and toiling the masses and reach our destiny.

□

# LAND STRUGGLE OF KARNATAKA TUMKUR FARMERS

- T.Yashwantha

Farmers of Gangayyanapalya and surrounding villages have been cultivating on the land for about 70 years now. Gangayyanapalya belongs to Manchaladore and Ankasandra Gram Panchayats of Chelur Hobali, Gubbi Taluk in Tumkur District, which is situated about 150 km away from Bengaluru, state capital of Karnataka.

Eight years ago, their land in Gangayyanapalya and surrounding areas were seized by the forest department using violent and old colonial methods. The farmers have once again taken control of this land through heroic struggles under the leadership of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha (AIKS).

About 70 years ago, the ancestors of the farmers of this area converted this vast hilly as well as low lying land into arable land and cultivated food grains, pulses and oilseeds including millet, corn, toor dal and groundnuts relying on rainfall.

Since 1990, as and when the past governments appealed farmers to apply for regularising Bagar Hukum land (encroached land without legal titles), farmers have applied accordingly, on three occasions. Even though nearly thirty years have passed since they submitted their applications as stated earlier, due to the lack of resolve on the part of past governments, they were forced to keep running from pillar to post, to obtain the title deeds of their land. The government that has been indiscriminately allotting vast stretches of land at various locations that were set aside as forest land to private business interests for mining and other

corporate exploitative activities, here in this case, has arbitrarily converted the revenue land set aside as go-mala land (land that is set aside for cattle-grazing) in which the farmers have been ploughing and doing agricultural activities to earn their livelihood, arguably, in order to compensate for what they have given away to private businesses and also to show that still there is adequate forest area in the state. Farmers who know nothing about these dramas going on within the government departments, have been living with hopes of obtaining legal titles to the land they cultivate on.

However, about ten years ago, forest department officials, out of the blue, arrived and destroyed the crops, and threatened the farmers saying that they would be jailed if crops were grown on the lands which they termed as “forest land”. Those who resisted were subjected to various forms of torture. By intimidation and by frightening those families who have been doing farming in this land and having possession of this land for a long time, were evicted from their land by using various methods such as kidnapping, physical assault, violence, sexual harassment, attempted rapes, forcefully entering into their houses and snatching away their agricultural equipments, giving imprisonment in false



cases, harassment and others. However, even now, in spite of all these atrocities, some farmers have continued to have the possession of their land.

The farmers in this area came to know about the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha (AIKS), which has been fighting for the rights of Bagar Hukum farmers across the state, and were attracted to the organisation and since 2017, have been fighting for the repossession of their agricultural land, from which they are evicted. In 2017, farmers were arrested and threatened during a march to Tumkur District Collector's office. At that time, the then AIKS leader KK Rakesh, Member of Parliament from Kerala, personally participated in the protest in front of the local police station demanding the release of the farmers. Due to the pressure of several struggles like Vidhana Soudha Chalo and others, they all were once again given an opportunity to apply in Forum No. 57, under the provision of Bagar Hukum Saguvali Sakrama Programme (Programme to Regularise Encroached Land sans Legal Titles).

On the revenue land that had been captured from the farmers, the forest department had planted eucalyptus trees, against the Supreme Court order, as the trees destroy biodiversity. Forest officials have done so because eucalyptus grows very quickly, and that helps them to take away the rights of the farmers on the land.

Farmers' struggle was temporarily slowed down during the pandemic period. In June 2022, a day and night dharna was held in front of the District Collector's office to protect the right of Bagar Hukum cultivating farmers and also demanding not to violate the rights to possession of land. The indefinite sit-in Dharna was called off after four consecutive days as the District Collector gave a written assurance that he would hold a joint meeting with the

Forest Department and the Revenue Department to resolve the issues.

In the meantime, the forest department had cleared the eucalyptus trees. On this occasion, the farmers again started a struggle to get their possession back and started a struggle on 17 March, 2022 under the leadership of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha (AIKS), raising the slogan, "Either We Get Repossession of Land or Jail Bharao (fill the jail)".

It was decided to withdraw the protest on the conditions that no trenching and planting of trees or any other activities to be carried out on this Bagar Hukum land from then and with the resolution that the struggle to rectify discrepancies in RTC would be carried on.

But on 30 March 2023, breaching the given assurance, a force of more than hundred people from the forest department, consisting not only of its staff members but also of people with criminal background disguised as forest officials, entered the land and started to dig the trenches and make rows of furrows required for planting trees with huge machines. The farmers were brutally lathi charged when they questioned this. More than thirty farmers were seriously injured in this attack. KPRS Gubbi taluk President Comrade Dodda Nanjaiah was injured and had 31 stitches on his head. District Secretary Comrade C Ajappa was also hit with a stick. Women and men belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes too were among those who were beaten up during the lathi charge.

Ultimately, on 1 April, 2023 holding the red flag of AIKS, the farmers courageously entered the land, levelled the illegally dug trenches by the forest department and took back the possession of their land. The conflict with the forest department and the BJP state government continues. □



# FARMERS OF CHAMBAL WIN AGAIN PLAN TO GRAB LAND CANCELLED FOR THE FIFTH TIME

- Ashok Tiwari

Morena (Madhya Pradesh): Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was finally forced to announce the cancellation of “Survey of the Atal Progress Way Road Project”, which was destroying Chambal Valley Bhind, Morena, Sheopur Kalan, snatches away the land of farmers, affecting more than one lakh houses and more than five lakh population under the pressure of people. Madhya Pradesh Kisan Sabha State President Ashok Tiwari called it a historic victory of the farmers’ movement. This decision was made in haste after the Chambal farmers going to Delhi for agitation was announced.

Large Maha Panchayats of farmers were organised by the Madhya Pradesh Kisan Sabha in Mangrol, Jhundpura etc. These Kisan Maha Panchayats were mainly addressed by Badal Saroj, National Joint Secretary of All India

Kisan Sabha. The villages decided that the farmers who are continuously agitating in the Chambal area will march to Delhi on April 4. On the first day, the farmers would participate in the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh rally to be held on April 5 and after on April 6, they would stage an intense protest at Parliament Street. Farmers in every village and every street had started preparations for the Parliament demonstration. As soon as the government got a clue of the intensity of the movement, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh immediately announced that the Atal Progress Way Road Project is cancelled.

The farmers of the entire Chambal region celebrated the victory and it has been emphasised that every action of the government to loot the land of the farmers will be rightfully countered. It is to be noted that



the farmers have waged struggles to save Chambal Valley four times before this and stood against the claws of the rapacious corporates. The saga of saving Chambal land is an important victory in the farmers' struggle. Farmers were agitating against the Atal Progress Road Project for six months. In the project of about 400 kilometres passing through Bhind, Morena and Sheopur, actions were being taken to acquire the valuable, flat, irrigated, multi-cropped lands of small and marginal farmers. As per the survey that was done, thousands of farmer families were about to be landless and homeless. There was a provision to give one kilometre of land to the corporate on both sides of the Atal Expressway that was about to be built. Kisan Sabha started the movement by holding a padyatra, bike and jeep jatha in all the villages. Farmers had strongly opposed this project by holding mahapanchayats at the local level, demonstrating in front of the Tehsil and Collector's office. The government was forced to retreat under the pressure of the united farmers' movement.

Congratulating all the farmers for this

victory, Madhya Pradesh Kisan Sabha has appealed to them to remain organised and aware. MP Kisan Sabha President Ashok Tiwari and General Secretary Akhilesh Yadav said in an appeal issued after this victory that the danger of expropriating farmers' land and gifting them to corporate companies at the stake of them being homeless has not yet averted. This anti farmer government will make every possible effort to snatch the land of the farmers to serve the corporates. They have appealed that all the farmers should remain united and vigilant by forming organisations in every village.

Madhya Pradesh Kisan Sabha President Ashok Tiwari, Madhya Pradesh Kisan Sabha District General Secretary of Morena Murari Lal Dhakad, Chambal Valley Bachao Kisan Sangharsh Samiti Chambal Division President Rakesh Shukla, Murari Lal Dhakad, General Secretary Ram Prakash Singh, Vice President Gopal Singh Rawat Awadhesh Singh Jadaun, Dinesh Singh Sikarwar, Bunty Jadaun, Secretary Vakil Singh Rawat, Ravi Jadaun, Ramswaroop Rajak and Shankar Singh have congratulated the farmers for this victory. □



# FARMERS OF GREATER NOIDA HOLD KISAN MAHAPANCHAYAT UNDER THE BANNER OF AIKS

-Pushpendra Tyagi



Farmers under the banner of All India Kisan Sabha have organised Mahapanchayat in front of Greater Noida Development Authority today. Thousands of farmers participated in this Panchayat. AIKS General Secretary Vijoo Krishnan addressed the struggle. This Mahapanchayat was presided by local senior kisan leader Jagdish Lamberdar. AIKS Finance Secretary P Krishnaprashad, CKC members Pushpendra Tyagi and Manoj Kumar also participated in this Panchayat. Gautam Budh Nagar Kisan Sabha leader Rupesh Varma, Veer Singh Nagar, Narander Bhati, Bijander and others also addressed this Panchayat. Local leaders of Azad Samaj Party, Berojgar Kisan Sangathan, Samajwadi party and BKU also participated and addressed the Mahapanchayat.

Farmers are on an indefinite Dharna for the last 8 days at the gate of Greater Noida Authority and on the eighth day of this Dharna this Mahapanchayat was organised.

The farmers have placed the following demands to the Greater Noida Authority:

1. 10% of developed plots should be allotted to the

farmers as per the agreement.

2. Revise the circle rate of the village to 4 times the circle rate as per the new law. Compensation should be declared @ Rs 24,000 per square metre.

3. Rejected cases and pending cases of the residents should be heard and the action of the lease bank should be taken immediately.

4. 17.5% Kisan quota should be provided in all the residential schemes of the authority.

5. As per the 1997 agreement with the farmers, the policy of giving plots to 10% of the population should be restored immediately.

6. The policy of minimum plot size of 120 square meters should be restored immediately.

7. Landless families should be given 40 square metre plots as per the agreement of Patwari.

8. As per the acquisition law and administrative orders, mandatory employment policy should be implemented.

9. Free education and treatment facility should be provided in the authority area to affected families. □



Small coffee farmers from Arakku valley in Andhra Pradesh, under the banner of Coffee Farmers' Federation of India sieged the district administration office on February 20, demanding the clearing of pending arrears amounting to more than Rs 60 crores, ensure rates of Rs 500/kg for raw coffee and Rs 100/kg for parchment coffee and insurance against crop losses. CFFI is a crop-federation affiliated to AIKS.



On 26 December 2023, All India Sugarcane Farmers Federation (affiliated to AIKS) hold a demonstration in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu demanding higher rates for sugarcane and other cane-related issues.



The Joint Convention of CITU, AIAWU and AIKS of Andhra Pradesh was held at MB Bhavan, Vijayawada on 9th January, 2023. On behalf of AIKS, General Secretary Comrade Vijoo Krishnan addressed the Convention and called for making the 5th April Mazdoor-Kisan Rally in Delhi a massive success. AIAWU General Secretary B Venkat, CITU Vice President Sai Babu, State leaders of CITU, AIAWU, Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham and Andhra Pradesh Tenant Farmers' Association also addressed the Convention. The Convention decided to take the campaign against anti-people Narendra Modi-led BJP Government till the Village level and mobilise thousands to Delhi for the Rally. Public meetings, padayatra, house visits and various activities are planned in January, February and March.



A Joint Convention of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU was held at Indira Park, Hyderabad on 8th January, 2023 setting off the preparations for the Mazdoor -Kisan Rally on 5th April, 2023 in Delhi. All India Kisan Sabha General Secretary Comrade Vijoo Krishnan addressed the Convention along with CITU Treasurer Sai Babu, AIAWU General Secretary B. Venkat, Telangana Rythu Sangham Secretary and AIKS Joint Secretary T.Sagar, State President P.Sudarshan, T.Nagaiah and others. Thousands of workers and peasants from the State will be mobilised for the Delhi Rally. Padayatras, house campaign, seminars etc , will be held in the State in February and March to expose the communal, corporate Narendra Modi led BJP Government and popularise demands of the struggle. Minimum wage of <sup>1</sup> 26,000/- per month, pension of <sup>1</sup> 10,000/- per month, legal guarantee of MSP @ C2+50%, 200 days under MGNREGA and minimum wage of <sup>1</sup> 600, loan waiver, scrapping of Electricity Act Amendment Bill, stopping loot of resources in the name of National Monetization Pipeline etc are some of the demands of the struggle.



Rajasthan state committee organised massive protests in Churu district at the SDM Office in Taranagar on 13 January and in Rajgarh on 18- January. Protests have been organised in Hanumangarh district also. Thousands of farmers participated in the protests in front of SDM Office Nohar on 16-17 January. Farmers are demanding for the crops insurance claim based on crop cutting reports of every Tahsil.



CITU and AIKS in Kullu district organised a rally on 16 March 2023 appealing to the larger public to join the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally that will be held on April 5 in Delhi.



SKM Jind rally on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023



SKM rally at Ramlila Maidan, Delhi on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023

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