

# **The Voice of the Working Woman**

**CHANGE the POLICIES  
OR  
WE WILL CHANGE  
the GOVERNMENT**

**MAZDOOR  
KISAN  
SANGHARSH  
RALLY**

5th September 2018



## Youth Rally Against Unemployment — 3 November 2018

The Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) has decided to organise a day-long dharna at district headquarters all over the country before the offices of the central government establishments on September 15, 2018 followed by a **big rally of around 50,000 youth before Parliament on 3 November 2018**. These programmes will expose the employment killing policies of the government and its fraudulent campaign on employment generation.

CITU, AIKS and AIAWU have decided to extend all support, including the participation of their young members to the rally. This was announced from the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally.

## Kisan Long March to Delhi – 28 to 30 November 2018

The All India Kisan Samyukta Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSSCC) comprising of various farmers and agricultural workers' organisations in the country has decided to organise a 100 kilometre long march to Parliament from 7 to 8 locations in and around Delhi in which farmers and agricultural workers from all the parts of country will participate. The Padyatra will start on 28<sup>th</sup> November and will reach Delhi on 30 November 2018.

CITU has extended full support to the March.

## National Convention of Workers on 28 September 2018 and ensuing Two Day Nationwide General Strike

In continuation of the three days' Mahapadav of workers in November 2017, all the major central trade unions and almost all national independent federations of employees in services and establishments in state and central governments, defence-manufacturing, banks and insurance, telecom and workers of almost all strategic sectors of the economy viz., coal, steel, electricity, petroleum, engineering, port & dock, road transport, etc, both in public and private sector, have jointly decided to go in for nationwide campaign at the workplace level against the destructive economic policies of the government at the centre and pro-employer changes in labour laws. This will culminate in a two day countrywide general strike by the end of the year.

The National Convention of Workers to be held at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi on September 28, 2018, will draw up the details of the action programmes including a countrywide general strike.

### *The Voice of the Working Woman*

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## Why we have come...

*'Why have you come all the way to Delhi? Didn't this rain create problems for you?'*

This was the question some of the reporters asked the participants, the workers, peasants and agricultural workers, who poured into the national capital in hundreds of thousands on the 5<sup>th</sup> September. There were attempts to show that these toiling people were *brought* as a show of strength by the '*lal jhande wale*'.

But they were disappointed. The replies were sharp and straight. Minimum wages not honorarium, minimum support price, comprehensive legislation, jobs, curbing price rise – each and every single participant was clear about what they wanted and they wanted to tell the government what they wanted in no uncertain terms. *"Rain? Difficulties? This is nothing compared to what we face in our day to day lives. To end those difficulties, we are ready to face anything"*.

The anger among these toiling people, against the BJP led Modi government and its policies was palpable throughout – in their eyes, in their voices, in their gait. Where are the jobs? Where are the *acche din*? Why is the chowkidar feigning sleep when the Vijay Mallyas, Nirav Modis and Mehul Choksis are happily fleeing the country one after another after looting our money in the banks? They wanted answers. Why is the Prime Minister who speaks so often, so silent on these questions?

The workers, peasants and agricultural workers together raised their voice against the atrocities being committed on dalits, minorities and women. They expressed their anger against the attacks on the victims and their supporters while the culprits are protected and patronised by the BJP led governments, at the centre and in different states. They announced in unequivocal terms their determination to protect the unity of the people and thwart the attempts of the RSS and the BJP to divide people on the basis of religion, caste, region etc for their political gains.

These lakhs of people came to Delhi to declare their determination to defeat the BJP led government in the ensuing elections; their determination to see that people's livelihood issues are the focus of the national discourse, not irrelevant and non issues that are meant to divert their attention and disrupt their unity.

And they took an important message back home. Defeat the BJP they must, to save the country and people from this neoliberal regime, its communal divisive agenda and its authoritarian attacks on the basic democratic rights of the people. But this is not enough. The united struggle of the workers and peasants has to be directed against the neoliberal policies and the exploitative capitalist order. This requires further strengthening of such joint actions and struggles of the workers and peasants, who produce the wealth of this country. Struggles led by a strong worker peasant alliance alone can change anti people anti national policies, can protect national sovereignty, can change the exploitative society. This is the message of the *lal jhanda*.

The lakhs of workers and peasants who came to Delhi have now to carry this message to the thousands of lakhs of workers and peasants back home to build such a powerful alliance. The working class has to take lead in this important task ahead.

# Significance of the Mazdoor Kisan Rally

Prabhat Patnaik

The September 5 rally is of great significance, not only because at a time when the ruling political formation is distracting people's attention through divisive communal politics, this rally is focussing on common material issues of people's life, and thereby changing the discourse altogether, but also for another reason. This is the first time in the history of post-independence India that workers, peasants and agricultural labourers are marching together. We have



had rallies of workers and of peasants separately but never a rally where they came together. Their coming together in a rally is of great significance for the development of a worker-peasant alliance whose urgency has increased manifold under neo-liberalism.

The historical role of the worker-peasant alliance as outlined in Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*, which has provided the theoretical basis for all subsequent third world revolutionary praxis, was as follows: in countries coming late to capitalism, the bourgeoisie, instead of breaking up land concentration and dealing crippling blows to the old feudal property relations so that the democratic aspirations of the peasantry get fulfilled, as it had done in its classical period in the French revolution, allies itself with the feudal landlords. This is because it is afraid that any attack on feudal property would rebound into an attack on bourgeois property. The task of carrying forward the democratic revolution therefore now devolves upon the working class, which accomplishes this task through a worker-peasant alliance that captures State power to set up a People's Democratic Dictatorship. Having done so however the proletariat does not just stop there but moves on to socialism through an uninterrupted revolutionary struggle in the course of which its allies within the peasantry keep changing.

In societies like ours the worker-peasant alliance therefore has always been seen as the instrument for struggling against the bourgeois-landlord State for carrying forward the democratic revolution. Under neo-liberalism however the worker-peasant alliance acquires an additional significance *because even the economic interests of the workers and the peasants get directly linked.*

This is a point not often appreciated. The direct economic interests of workers and peasants have been traditionally seen as divergent, and even opposed, the former interested in higher prices for their products, including foodgrains, and the latter interested in lower foodgrain prices. This perception however has been devoid of relevance ever since the days of the *dirigiste* economic regime, which had set up (in late-1960s India), a whole system of procurement-cum-public distribution with two objectives in mind. One was to cut out sharp fluctuations in agricultural prices, so that the peasant producers are not hurt by price-crashes and the consumers by price-spikes, with the government stepping into the picture through absorbing or releasing commodity stocks to regulate prices. The second objective was to provide a remunerative price to peasant producers without imposing a squeeze on the consumers, through appropriate amounts of food subsidies provided by the national exchequer. Neo-liberalism therefore, when it arrives, does so in a scenario where any possible direct conflict of interest between workers and peasants has been obviated through the government coming forward with appropriate subsidies.

The contribution of neo-liberalism within this scenario however is invariably to *curtail* these subsidies, with the objective of controlling the fiscal deficit. This objective becomes paramount

because of the insistence of finance capital which dislikes all fiscal deficits (other than those that are incurred for its own benefit). Curtailing subsidies typically takes the form of reducing procurement prices for any given level of issue prices within the Public Distribution System. This however makes agriculture into an unprofitable occupation and pushes the peasantry into distress, which is exactly what has been happening in India. One manifestation of this distress has been the suicide of more than three lakh peasants over the last two decades; the other manifestation has been the abandonment of agriculture by as many as 15 million peasants between 1991 and 2011, according to data thrown up by the Censuses of these two years.

The peasants who abandon agriculture to seek employment elsewhere find that sufficient jobs are not available outside, despite the supposedly high rate of growth of the non-agricultural GDP. Between 2004-5 and 2009-10 for instance, when the GDP growth rate of the economy was extraordinarily high according to official estimates, the rate of growth of “usual status” employment (those who consider being employed as their usual status), which is perhaps the closest approximation to genuine employment, was a mere 0.8 percent per annum. This was way below the rate of growth of the work-force in the non-agricultural sector itself. The growth of the non-agricultural sector thus could not absorb even the natural increase in its work-force, let alone absorbing the displaced peasants.

The displaced peasants therefore merely swell the reserve army of labour. To be sure, the binary, active army-reserve army, no longer exists in a stark form in economies like ours. Employment rationing here takes the form not of some people being fully employed and others being fully unemployed, but rather of most people being partly unemployed. And this happens through a proliferation of casual employment, part-time employment, intermittent employment, “petty entrepreneurship” which is a form of disguised unemployment, and so on. But, no matter what form it takes, the relative size of the reserve army of labour increases, owing *inter alia* to the squeeze on the peasantry, which reduces the bargaining power of the workers, including even those who are unionized and enjoy a degree of job security. It is significant that the average real *wage-rate* of factory workers, i.e. of workers employed in establishments which employ 10 or more workers with power and 20 or more without power, was marginally lower in 2012-13 compared to 1990-91, according to data culled from the *Annual Survey of Industries*.

The squeeze on the peasantry in short lowers the average real earnings of all workers. Since the real wage rate does not increase, while employment per head falls (because the number of job-seekers grows relative to the number of jobs available), this must necessarily be true.

It follows therefore that a direct link is established under neo-liberalism between the economic conditions of the peasants and those of the workers. The worse the conditions of the peasantry, the greater is the migration from the countryside, the larger the relative size of the reserve army of labour, and hence the worse the average economic conditions of the non-agricultural workers. The worker-peasant alliance thus takes on an additional role in countries like ours in addition to what Lenin had written about, namely, to fight against the neo-liberal regime and to substitute it by an alternative regime that would lift both workers and peasants from the abject misery to which neo-liberalism reduces them.

The fact that an alliance between them derives from the objective situation of the workers and peasants within the neo-liberal order, i.e. that the workers cannot improve even their material conditions of life within that order without the peasantry also doing so, suggests that we can talk of an “alliance-in-itself”, along the lines that Marx himself had done about the working class when he had talked of a “class-in-itself”. This “alliance-in-itself” however has to become an “alliance-for-itself” through a process of common struggles. The September 5 rally is the first significant step in the direction of converting this “alliance-in-itself” into an “alliance-for-itself”.

*(Prof. Prabhat Patnaik, was Chairperson of the Reception Committee for the 5 September Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally in Delhi)*

# Towards A Strong Workers Peasants Alliance

K Hemalata

The lakhs of workers, peasants and agricultural workers who gathered in the historic 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' near Parliament in the national capital on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018 unanimously decided to strengthen the unity of these three class organisations and intensify joint actions against the anti people, anti national neoliberal policies. The Rally called upon the crores of workers, peasants and agricultural workers across the country to extend support and solidarity in all possible ways to each other's independent struggles and to build strong joint actions.

Thus the workers will extend active support and solidarity to the joint Kisan March on 28 -30 November, when thousands of peasants will walk around 100 km to converge in Delhi from different parts of India. The peasants all over the country will stand in solidarity with the workers in their struggle programmes including the country wide general strike, the date of which the Joint National Convention of Trade Unions will finalise on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The 'Workers Peasants Martyrdom Day', which was being jointly observed for the last three years on 19<sup>th</sup> January, will be held in a much more effective manner in 2019.



The enthusiasm for joint actions of the three major sections of society who produce the wealth of the country was visible from Day One. The announcement, in the CITU general council meeting in March 2018, that AIKS and AIAWU have agreed to join the massive rally planned by CITU, was welcomed with thunderous applause. The participation of lakhs of workers in the 'Jail Bharo' programme called by AIKS on 9<sup>th</sup> August and the participation of peasants in several places in the night long 'Samuhik Jagran' on the night of 14<sup>th</sup> August, called by CITU, kept that enthusiasm alive.

The floods that played havoc in Kerala and parts of Karnataka and later in Assam and other states in the north east, the incessant rains in many parts of the country could not dampen the spirit and determination of these lakhs of toiling people to jointly raise their voice against the policies that have been playing havoc with their lives. This was crisply stated by a tribal peasant from Chattisgarh – *"Our problems are much bigger than this rain; that is why we have come"*.

The incessant rains in Delhi created huge difficulties for CITU which had decided to organise a camp to receive the participants who were to reach national capital from 2<sup>nd</sup> September evening onwards. Large parts of the maidan turned muddy with big puddles of water, making only a third of the place available for erecting tents. Emergency arrangements had to be made to lessen the hardship for the participants to the maximum extent possible. Despite all the efforts, no space could be provided to many more thousands who had to stay in the railway stations. But the participants understood the difficulties and cooperated in a highly disciplined manner. Not a single person complained. Instead, there was a festive mood in the camp, with songs, short plays etc and people from different states exchanging their experience of struggles.

It was not only the rains that created difficulties for the participants. In several states the administration and the police tried different methods including threats and intimidation to prevent people from participating in the rally. The police in BJP ruled Manipur detained the leadership in a police station for two hours for issuing a press statement about sending workers and peasants from the state for the Rally. Fake and misleading reports were also circulated widely in the social media to prevent workers, particularly the scheme workers, from participating in the rally. In several states the authorities threatened them with disciplinary action or arranged official meetings etc on the same day.

Despite all these, lakhs of workers, peasants and agricultural workers from all over the country reached Delhi. The procession, led by the leadership of the three organisations, started from Ramlila Maidan at 9 o'clock and culminated in a public meeting at Parliament Street.

Even by 12.30 pm the tail end of the procession had not reached the venue of the public meeting. Hundreds of people were arriving in Delhi even when the rally was about to conclude. Delhi has not witnessed such a huge rally for decades. There were huge traffic jams. One policeman was heard answering somebody who asked the reason for the traffic jams *'I don't know, but they say lakhs of people have descended on Delhi last night!'*

The huge participation and the patience shown by the toiling people in facing all the hurdles to reach Delhi and participate in the Rally reflected their anger against their deteriorating conditions caused by the policies of the government, the major issue which the 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' has raised. The lakhs of people who assembled near Parliament were determined to raise their voice against this. They were determined to fight for the reversal of the policies that are not only against their own personal interests but also against the interests of the nation as a whole.

It was this determination that made them defy the adverse weather, defy the threats and intimidation of authorities and police and face the huge difficulties in travelling thousands of kilometres. The thousands of anganwadi employees, ASHA/USHA workers, midday meal workers, construction workers, MGNREGA workers, panchayat workers, village chowkidars etc travelled first from their villages to the nearest railway stations and then in jam packed railway compartments to reach Delhi, with many spending 2-3 days one way. They brought their food and many marched carrying their luggage on their heads.

Significantly, women workers comprised over half of the total participants in the Rally. While scheme workers particularly anganwadi employees, ASHA, USHA workers and midday meal workers comprised the largest contingent of women, women MGNREGA workers, beedi workers etc also participated in large numbers.

Another significant feature was the huge participation of industrial workers, from both public and private sectors. Road transport workers and electricity employees also participated in large numbers. State government and central government employees, BSNL, bank and insurance employees and school teachers participated in thousands.

Despite the fact that the thousands who were at the back could not hear the speeches because the police did not allow mikes after a certain point, and also despite large numbers of them not understanding Hindi, the language of most of the speeches, most of the participants sat in the meeting till it was declared concluded.

The chairman of the reception committee, Prabhat Patnaik, general secretaries of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU Tapan Sen, Hannan Mollah and Vijayaraghavan, along with other leaders of all the three organisations were on the dais. The presidium comprised of Hemalata, Ashok Dhawale and S Thirunavakkarasu, presidents of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU respectively.

Tapan Sen, Hannan Mollah and Vijayaraghavan were the main speakers from their respective organisations. They all strongly criticised the pro corporate policies of the government and vowed to intensify joint struggles to defeat them. The defeat of the Modi led BJP government is necessary for intensification of this struggle against these policies.

30 leaders representing the fraternal trade union organisations and the affiliated federations of CITU, and AIKS and AIAWU spoke in the meeting. Amra Ram from AIKS, Brijlal Bharti from AIAWU and Tapan Sen from CITU made the concluding remarks.

Tapan Sen emphasised the need to take joint campaigns and struggles to the grass root level immediately after going back to their respective places. He said that while defeating the Modi government was an immediate necessity that does not ensure reversal of anti people policies. Sustained joint struggles of the workers and peasants are essential not only for the reversal of the neoliberal policies but also for a change in the capitalist system of which exploitation is an inherent part.

# 5<sup>TH</sup> September Rally, a Game Changer in Indian Politics

A R Sindhu

**There is a qualitative change in the peoples' resistance movement in India**

The 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' on 5<sup>th</sup> September is unique and has a crucial historic relevance on many counts. It is the first ever mobilization of the basic classes – workers, peasants and agricultural labour together in the capital of India. The rally outnumbered all recent mobilizations in Delhi and the discipline and the level of understanding of the participants on issues has set another benchmark for the future. The media coverage the rally received was a compulsion imposed by the people's movement on the media barons. The most crucial contribution of this historic rally is that it put the class question on the political agenda of the country, a question which can no longer be ignored.



Since the introduction of the neoliberal policies in India, starting from 1991 itself, the trade union movement under the leadership of CITU tried to build the resistance to these. In 1991, if it was CITU and a few other left trade unions who organised the first nationwide general strike, by 2009, we could rally all the central trade unions including INTUC and BMS against these policies. However, later, on the eve of the 2015 General strike the BMS left the joint platform. Since 1991 there have been 17 strikes by the trade unions against the neoliberal policies adopted by successive governments in India.

The consistent struggles by the working class movement, often termed as ritualistic by many, could keep the resistance alive and through years of campaign and struggles could instil confidence in the peasantry, (whose distress was marked by suicide and not resistance), and bring them into the fight. The resistance movement of the peasantry under the leadership of AIKS against the land acquisition bill/ordinance supported by the working class movement and the general strike in 2015 could force the Modi government to backtrack on the bill. The AIKS and the different platforms of the peasantry with its leading role took the struggles further on different issues, including the ban on cattle trade and the lynching of peasants. The Kisan Long March in Maharashtra and the struggles in states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh could be more bigger to people's movement.

The working class movement could give a strong resistance to the different moves to reduce real wages, the pro corporate changes in labour laws, the privatization of PSUs and public utilities etc. The peasant organisations could build a movement on the minimum support price, loan waiver etc. These consistent movements helped in the formation of the Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA), the joint platform of class, mass and social organizations, with the strong base of class organizations.

One should recall the shape that these resistance movements took in the intervening period and the resultant political as well as policy interventions they could make. The National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO), the joint platform of class and mass organizations was a platform formed by organisations that came together to resist the neoliberal policies. The struggles under the NPMO leadership, including Bharat Bandh calls, could make some advance in building resistance against neoliberal policies which eventually resulted even in changes in governments. The United Front government and the UPA governments are examples of such changes. However,



these changes in governments were based on popular political slogans and issues and for an apparent change in face or party, rather than being focussed on clear class demands.

Today we face a different situation with the systemic world economic crisis and its impact and the resultant rightward shift in the world as well as in Indian politics. Various manifestations of this crisis and the more aggressive character of the Indian ruling classes, accompanied by ruthless social oppression, have imposed unprecedented burdens on the Indian people. The fundamental democratic, secular character of the country and the Constitution is at stake. This crisis and the ruthless multipronged attack of neoliberalism at the same time have prepared the ground for resistance by the people, led by the working class and the peasantry.

Twenty five years of neoliberal policies in India have also witnessed the growth and consolidation of various class, mass and social movements against them. The coming together of these class, mass and social organizations, movements and platforms marks another stage in the people's resistance movement.

However, these struggles of the basic classes have to be developed further to turn them into a political force in order to compel a change in policies rather than only a change of governments from time to time. Various streams other than those of the basic classes - collaborationist, compromising, pro-rich farmers, politically motivated, electorally oriented etc within the movements are operating strongly. It is the need of the hour to channelize these movements into a broad based struggle against the neo liberal policies under the leadership of the movement of the basic classes.

At this juncture the CITU took the initiative to develop the movement in the direction of a strong worker-peasant alliance, from the top to the base. The decision for the joint mazdoor kisan sangharsh rally came from the CITU, with the AIKS and AIAWU responding to this initiative. The independent struggles by CITU, AIKS and AIAWU were organised in a series, the 9<sup>th</sup> August Jail Bharo, 14<sup>th</sup> August Samuhik Jagran and the culmination, the 5<sup>th</sup> September Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally.

The massive response to the widespread campaign in the last five months (from April to August) on the joint charter of demands covering all issues of the workers, peasants and agricultural workers shows the potential of the correct politics at the right juncture to transform into a decisive political force. More than five lakh workers and peasants courted arrest on 9<sup>th</sup> August. Apart from the political motives, the support by all India Ambedkar Mahasabha to the 9<sup>th</sup> August Jail Bharo demonstrates that even social movements based on identity politics have been compelled to accept the leadership of class politics.

For the first time since the advent of neoliberalism, the politics and the movement of the basic classes, the working class, agricultural labour and poor peasants has emerged as the focal point and the other progressive social movements – of youth, students, women, environmentalists, dalits, tribals, minorities, all marginalized sections are joining the stream. The strong and widespread base of the trade union movement will act as the foundation of this movement.

This trajectory has to be strengthened and consolidated. The class movement needs to stand by every social resistance movement to fulfill its leadership role. In the coming days, the working class strike will be supported by the peasantry, the peasants' march will be supported by the working class, the youth demand for jobs for all, the student demand for education for all will be supported by the basic classes, women's issues will be taken up as the issues of the entire society, the dalit and tribal movements are no longer merely social issues but are class issues.

In the coming days class politics will play a decisive role.

The 5<sup>th</sup> September Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally marks a qualitative change in the history of peoples' resistance movements in India and will prove to be the game changer in India's politics.

# Carry Forward the Worker-Peasant Alliance in Action

Tapan Sen

The historic and massive ‘**Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally**’ before Parliament on September 5, 2018, led by the CITU, AIKS and AIAWU, was preceded by a series of countrywide campaigns, mobilisations and agitations. Now the struggle against the anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies of the government at the centre has entered a new phase with an altogether new dimension. The enthusiastic response the call received right from the preparatory phase itself until the massive participation of workers, peasants and agricultural workers in the September 5 rally from every part of the country, extreme south to north, east and west, is itself an indication of the warm welcome accorded by the people to this new feature – organised resistance by the working class along with its main class ally, the agricultural workers and peasants, against the neoliberal order.

This is for the first time in the history of the country’s democratic movement that such joint worker peasant actions could be organised at district and even lower levels in several states, culminating in the massive national rally. Post independent India has now witnessed, perhaps, the historically mandated initiative of building joint class resistance by the workers, agricultural workers and peasants, who are the real creators of national wealth, the principal contributors to the national exchequer both directly and indirectly, besides keeping the wheel of the national economy moving. If they stop working concertedly, everything will collapse –and that speaks about their central role in keeping the country moving. The assertion of the class alliance of the workers and peasants will help the entire toiling class realise and discover their inbuilt potential and strength to fight the crisis-ridden system of exploitation for complete transformation of the system itself in favour of the toiling class.



This new dimension of worker-peasant alliance has to be strengthened and carried forward with a continuity – that is the direction given to all of us by such a huge spontaneous response to the massive rally of the toiling people of the country at the national capital.

Efforts to build joint campaigns and agitations have been going on for the last several years. CITU has taken the initiative for a joint campaign including the AIKS and AIAWU to ‘Save ICDS’, a comprehensive scheme for child development, from privatisation and ultimate dismantling. Efforts were made to involve the peasants and agricultural workers who were the beneficiaries of the scheme and the anganwadi employees who implement it at the grassroots level. Similar efforts were made on the issue of the electricity bills.

Since the last three years, CITU, AIKS and AIAWU have been jointly observing January 19 every year, as workers-peasants martyrdom day, to commemorate the death in police firing of 10 people including workers, agricultural workers and peasants, on the occasion of the first joint countrywide strike after independence, on that day in 1982. The demands of this strike included the major demands of the peasants and agricultural workers – remunerative prices for the peasants and comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers.

The joint trade union movement also extended active solidarity and support to the countrywide struggle by AIKS and other peasant organisations against the retrograde land acquisition ordinance followed by the related bill by the BJP led Modi government. The joint trade union movement opposed that ordinance and bill in all its agitations and struggles. The strong opposition of the peasants, with firm solidarity of the working class movement, ultimately compelled the Modi government to allow the ordinance to lapse and to shelve the bill, at least for the time being. The struggles of the peasantry on their other demands like minimum support price, loan waiver etc have also received support and solidarity of the trade union movement.

The initiatives for such joint actions got a new momentum in the current year. The peasants' struggles facing police repression in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and their Long March from Nasik to Mumbai inspired workers across the country. The massive country wide general strikes and the unprecedented three day 'Mahapadav' of the workers enthused the peasants. The CITU general council held in March 2018 welcomed the AIKS call for countrywide jail bhara on August 9, 2018 and decided to participate in the programme throughout the country, shoulder to shoulder with the peasant-folk. AIKS and AIAWU welcomed the initiative of CITU to organise a massive March to Parliament on September 5, 2018 and agreed to join it, thereby making it a Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally.

The enthusiasm generated by the joint call is reflected in the massive participation of more than five lakh peasants and workers in the **Jail Bhara on August 9, 2018**, in at least 540 locations in 393 districts, across the country.

It was also reflected in the night long '**Samuhik Jagran' programme on the night of August 14, 2018**, on the eve of Independence Day, which was observed in 395 locations covering all the states, by over 62,000 workers and their families; peasants joined the programme in many places. In addition, the three organisations joined together in the campaign at the grassroots level in several states to expose the anti-people and anti-national policy regime.

These joint activities and campaigns demonstrate the commitment of the toiling people for countrywide united struggles against the neoliberal policies, to safeguard their rights and living conditions. They hold the promise for developing militant joint struggles aimed at reversal of these policies and bringing in a pro-people policy regime. This has to be achieved through sustained efforts to continue the struggle and take it to new heights.

The worker-peasant alliance's determination to carry on joint struggle with a continuity, right from its preparatory phase itself, started impacting the atmosphere of struggle countrywide, drawing organisations of other sections of the common populace, irrespective of affiliations, into the battle line. Already the united platform of central trade unions and federations has been conducting several agitations including numerous strike actions against the neoliberal policy regime since decades. In that process the platform of unity got consistently widened to draw almost all central trade unions and federations in the country to the united platform of struggle. In that background, the worker-peasant alliance initiative has added momentum to the urge for loud expression of unrest and anger among the mass of the populace, drawing various segments of the society into the frontline of struggle against the grievous impact of the anti-people policies on their lives and livelihood.

The **Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI)** decided to organise a **day-long dharna on September 15, 2018 at district headquarters** all over the country before the offices of the

central government establishments followed by a big rally of around 50,000 youth before Parliament on November 3. These programmes will expose the employment killing policies of the government and its fraudulent campaign on employment generation.

The **All India Kisan Sanjukta Sangharsh Coordination Committee** (AIKSSCC) comprising various farmers and agricultural workers' organisations in the country has decided to organise a **100 kilometre long march to Parliament from 7 to 8 locations in and around Delhi from 28 to 30 November**, in which farmers and agricultural workers from all the parts of country will participate.

All the major central trade unions and almost all national independent federations of employees in services and establishments in state and central governments, defence-manufacturing, banks and insurance, telecom and workers of almost all strategic sectors of the economy viz., coal, steel, electricity, petroleum, engineering, port & dock, road transport, etc, both in the public and private sector, have jointly decided to go in for nationwide campaign at the workplace level against the destructive economic policies of the government at the centre and its nefarious design to impose slavery on the working people through pro-employer change in labour laws, which will culminate in a two day countrywide general strike by the end of the year. **The National Convention of Workers to be held at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi on September 28, 2018**, will draw up the details of the action programmes including countrywide general strike. Besides the above, many more sectoral struggles are in the offing.

We are fighting against the neoliberal policies of an extreme right-reactionary government at the centre which is spearheading the worst onslaught on the lives and livelihood of the toiling people in every sector and segment of the economy. It is the most heinous political gang which is carrying on a poisonous campaign as a part of its governing strategy to cultivate communal and divisive polarisation to weaken and disrupt the unity of the people. We are fighting against a venomous as well as authoritarian outfit, which, with the use of the state machinery under its command, is seeking to curb the right to dissent and to free expression that is an inseparable ingredient of democracy. All these are integral to the singular strategy of the neoliberal capitalist order and its operator in governance to sustain itself in the midst of the deepening crisis in which it is engulfed.

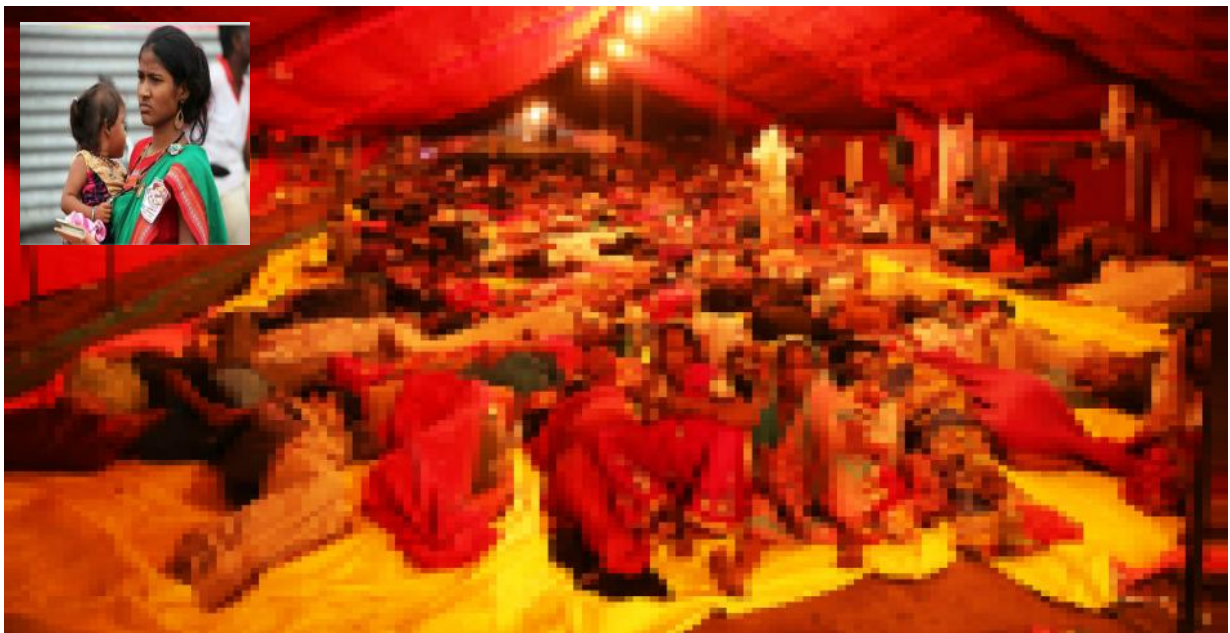
Our struggle has to be directed comprehensively against the neoliberal capitalist order and the authoritarian as well as poisonous machinations on the society by their extreme right wing operators in the seat of governance.

The worker-peasant alliance in this struggle will definitely widen the unity of the toiling class in its entirety. Cementing and broadening this alliance in every phase of struggle is the crucial task before us. This needs a more proactive role of the class oriented trade union movement to assert and actively involve with solidarity actions in every phase of the struggles and activities of the peasants' and agricultural workers' organisations, be it at the local, state or national level. It is the prime responsibility of the working class movement to carry forward this alliance in action towards a more stable platform of action against the neoliberal capitalist order and the politics of neoliberalism consistently and continuously.

Let the huge success of August 9 Jail Bharo, the 14 August Samuhik Jagran and September 5 Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally has given us the confidence and armed us with the resolve to discharge this responsibility. Let all our organisations be charged with that confidence and resolve.

**We Shall Overcome!**

# Camp at Ramlila Maidan



# March



# March



The Voice of the Working Woman

# Rally





# AIDWA Demands Freedom from Violence, Hunger and Unemployment

Mariam Dhawale

It was a truly memorable rally. Nearly 10,000 women marching on the roads of Delhi for two hours, in torrential rain! But even the drenching could not subdue their indomitable spirit. They came from the nooks and corners of 23 states in the country. They belonged to every caste, religion and community. The women marched, the old and the young with children in their arms, from Mandi House to Parliament Street on September 4, 2018 under the banner of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA). They marched to demand freedom from violence, fear, hunger and unemployment. They came to express their deep anger against the Modi government. They declared that they were undeterred by the terror tactics of the RSS-BJP.

Narendra Modi made a lot of promises before the 2014 elections, but has done nothing for women. This government has failed on all counts. Women expressed their anger against the alarming increase in violence and brutality against women, especially girl children, threatened food security, the grim spectre of starvation and malnutrition, rising unemployment, and the escalating communal and casteist attacks by the goons of the RSS-BJP. Crimes against women have increased by 34 percent in the last four years. Women are not safe under the BJP central and state governments. Rapists are roaming free while women and children are forced to stay indoors. The jumla of *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* stands exposed. Now the slogan should be – *BJP se Beti Bachao* ! This protest rally resolved to expose the BJP government for having reneged on its promise to provide safety and security for the women of our country.

There are serious livelihood problems also. The government has not provided regular work under MNREGA. Due to the slashing of the budget for MNREGA, work is now not available. How do we light our stoves in these times of inflation, demanded the women. Price rise of all essential commodities and gas cylinders has forced half our population to go to bed hungry. The biometric machines do not recognise the finger prints of the majority of the women who labour hard in fields and as unorganised labour. *"I am standing right there, but my existence is denied and I have to return home empty handed to my hungry children,"* said a woman from Jharkhand with anger in her eyes. The Aadhaar card and biometric machines must be discarded.

AIDWA patron Brinda Karat said that the last four years of Modi rule have been a betrayal of its election promises. Instead of giving food grains, they have forced linkage of the Aadhaar card and have thus increased starvation deaths. Women are being pushed back into their homes instead of being provided jobs. Communal and caste tensions are on the rise. Atrocities on women are increasing and the BJP goons



are standing in support of the criminals, as glaringly seen in Kathua and Unnao. This is an anti-women government and it must go.

The rally was presided over by AIDWA president Malini Bhattacharya and was addressed by vice president Subhashini Ali. Delhi state secretary Asha Sharma welcomed the rally participants.

The resolution of the rally was placed by AIDWA general secretary Mariam Dhawale

The resolution vowed to confront the BJP regime, refusing to be silenced by the BJP-RSS culture of fear and stand up for equality and basic rights enshrined in the constitution. It vowed to expose the Sangh Parivar and the Modi-led government for the failure to deliver on its promises. The rally also witnessed heart rending testimonies of women who are struggling for justice for victims of violence and right wing vigilantism. They systematically demonstrated how the BJP government supported by the Sangh Parivar is subverting all democratic norms in the country. They also showed the spirit of resistance and hope by demonstrating how they, in their own ways, were resisting such political forces to bring about social transformation.

The rally ended with a resolve to intensify the nation-wide campaign against the Modi government and expose the sinister designs of the Sangh Parivar and its armed vigilante groups. The women vowed to continue their campaign against the anti-women character of the right-wing Modi government and mobilise the mass of women in all states on December 10, International Human Rights Day.

## **AIDWA Welcomes SC Judgement on Decriminalisation of IPC 377**

**A**IDWA welcomes the historic and path breaking Supreme Court judgment in the Navtej Singh Johar case which decriminalizes consensual sex between adults in the LGBTQ community and amongst others. This judgment in effect legally recognizes homosexuality and whittles down a 158-year-old colonial law which led to immense suffering and discrimination against the LGBTQ community. Section 377 in the Indian Penal Code referred to unnatural offences and punished “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” with any man, woman or animal, with ten years of imprisonment. Section 377 had long been used as a weapon to harass and punish the LGBTQ community.

The Supreme Court, rightly, in four concurring verdicts recognized sexual orientation as a biological phenomena and said that any discrimination on this ground is violative of the fundamental rights of an individual. Overturning a retrogressive 2013 judgment in Suresh Kaushal’s case, the Court held that that case had wrongly been guided by a majoritarian perception of social morality. The CJI held that the respect for individual choice is the essence of liberty and that the LGBTQ community has the same equal rights under the constitution as everyone else. The judgment also rightly held that denying a person’s right to sexual orientation is violative of right to privacy and freedom of an individual to conduct his sexual life and personal relationships as he wishes. Another judge remarked that the society owes an apology to the LGBTQ community for the ostracization and persecution they faced because of society’s ignorance that homosexuality is a natural trait and its penal suppression infringes a host of fundamental rights.

Justice Chandrachud further said that decriminalizing gay sex is only a first step and the time has come to move forward and give the LGBTQ community other constitutional rights. The CJ pointed out that criminalizing gay sex is irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary while Justice Nariman has asked the state to give wide publicity to the judgment and to sensitize key actors like the Police.

AIDWA believes that members of the LGBTQ community like other citizens of the Country should be governed by a full range of constitutional and civil rights and this progressive and positive judgment is a step towards achieving those rights.

# Amid Debate over Unemployment, Government Still Sitting on 24 lakh Vacancies

- Reports suggest that there are at least 24 lakh jobs that right now are present with the State and Central government.
- This is data collected from answers to a number of questions in the Parliament show.
- There are 10 lakh vacancies in teaching that are there in elementary schools as well as secondary schools
- Law and order is a state subject and primarily come under the state governments.



In context to joblessness in the country, reports suggest that there are at least 24 lakh jobs that right now are present with the State and Central government. This comes from the data collected from answers to a number of questions in the Parliament show.

Getting down with the details of the report, there are almost **10 lakh vacancies in teaching** that are there in the elementary schools as well as secondary schools, at the moment that was confirmed during the question answer on the 8th February in the Upper House, Rajya Sabha. According to the reports, there are a maximum number of vacancies that are available for teachers at the state level or at the Union territory administrations. The point to be noted here is that the vacancies that are mentioned here, are actually exclusive to those offered under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Other than the number of vacancies that are mentioned in Rajya Sabha, the questions that were answered in Lok Sabha on 27th March suggest that there was almost **4.4 lakh civil and district armed police vacancies**. The numbers have been fetched as per the record by the Bureau of Police Research & Development. Other than the 4.4 lakh vacancies, there are almost 90,000 odd positions in addition that are available in state armed police, which takes the total to **5.4 lakh vacancies that are present in the armed forces**.

Talking in context to other such vacancies in other fields of work, one of the Lok Sabha questions stated on 18th July points to the fact that there are more than **5800 vacancies that are there for courts**. Likewise, there are over **1.2 lakh vacant positions that still persist in areas like paramilitary forces and defence services**.

There was a question answered in 16th March 2018, which reveals that there are almost **2.5 lakh vacant posts** that are there amongst the non-gazetted staff in the area of **railways**, out of which there are 89,000 seats notification that have already been announced.

Getting down to the **Postal department**, reports suggest that there are over **54,000 vacancies** that are available in the postal department. There was the other question answered in Rajya Sabha on 6th February, which showed that there have been almost 1.5 lakh vacancies that are there in these centres.

Looking at the **health sector**, this is another area with the casualty of vacancies in sanctioned positions. According to a Rajya Sabha question answered on 6th February shows that there are almost **1.5 lakh vacancies** that are there in these centres, of which 16,000 pertain to doctors or specialists, whereas others include the nursing staff. Speaking of **law and order**, this is a state subject and these positions primarily come under the state governments.

*(Courtesy : The Times of India, emphasis added)*

## The Farmers Plight

**B**hagwan Bhijne and Jitendra Kumar Chopada, farmers from the Marathwada and Vidharba regions of Maharashtra, spoke to us about the plight of farmers in these regions and their struggle, when they were in Delhi to participate in the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally on September 5.

Excerpts :-

Q. What crops do you cultivate?

A. *Both Marathwada and Vidharba regions are basically cotton-belts. Between the cotton plants, we also grow 'tuar'. Also we cultivate 'makki', 'jawaar', 'bajra', 'udat' and 'moong' in small quantity. Those who have access to irrigation grow vegetables. For the last 10 years or so, we grow soya bean too. When we were young, we did not even know the name of soya bean!*



Q. Why and how did you begin to sow soya bean?

A. *When cotton cultivation became very expensive, soya bean was suggested as a better choice. It grew easily with less inputs.*

Q. Less input means?

A. *The cost of seeds, fertilizer, labour etc. was less.*

Q. Why did the cotton cultivation become so expensive?

A. *In 2002, the government introduced GM (genetically modified) cotton seeds in India. We were told that GM seeds will prevent pests and the yield will be high. GM seeds had to be purchased from Monsanto, a multinational company. We could no more use our own seeds that we preserved from last year's crop.*

Q. But surely you were not forced to opt for GM seeds?

A. *Forced indirectly. If one field is sown with GM seeds and the adjoining ones aren't, all the pests the GM resists attack the non-GM field. So there is no option but to go for GM.*

Q. Did the yield increase?

A. *Initially, for 2 to 3 years it did. But the cost of cultivation also increased. Buying seeds from multinational companies, fertilizers, labour, irrigation, everything became costlier. The pests became increasingly resilient.*

Q. Wasn't the GM seed supposed to resist pests?

A. *Actually they were resistant to some pests, not all. And when the crop failed, the farmers found themselves trapped in a vicious circle of debt and more debt.*

Q. Would you explain?

A. *After spending a lot of money, when the crop failed, the farmer found himself on the point of starvation. The local provision store, after some time refuses to give him anything on credit unless he clears the pending payment. And how does he pay? He has no money. He is also*

unable to pay back the bank-loan that he took to cultivate cotton. For sowing the next crop, he has no money. The bank refuses to give him fresh loan unless he clears his previous due. So he goes to private money-lender. Thus he gradually sinks into a debt cycle from which it is impossible to come out. In such a situation, many commit suicide. Maximum number of farmer suicides has taken place in Maharashtra.

Q. The government gave compensation to those families, no?

A. (Both laugh) *Compensation and promises have become government strategies to cool down peoples' anger. They are never fulfilled. The government tries to project that the suicide was not due to distress related to crop-failure, it was actually due to alcoholism. Such things make even the claim for compensation impossible. Many families of those farmers who committed suicide have seen more suicides of other family members. The daughter committed suicide to relieve the family of the burden of arranging money for her wedding, the son committed suicide because he could not continue with his education . . . the wife went into depression. The woes and ordeals are endless.*

Q. You were telling about resilient pests. Please elaborate.

A. *There are various kinds of pests, saffron pests, green pests, pink pests that come in huge numbers and attack the crop. They are so resilient that some farm-labourers who were spraying pesticides on them died of the fumes but those pests didn't! Those pests, after eating up the entire crop, settle down on the neem trees that are supposed to be antidote for pests! They keep eating up the neem-leaves. You can see a soft carpet of pest-goo under those trees. You will not see such healthy neem-trees( pointed at the tree we were sitting under at the Parliament Street) in our village! These pests even settle down inside our dry fire-wood for days together waiting to attack the next crop. They have completely destroyed the many edible green plants that grow wild and poor village folks eat.*

*All hell has been let loose after introducing GM. If the government ever decides to introduce GM in other crops, it will be the end for all of us.*

Q. Didn't those pests exist before?

A. *They did. But they were destroyed in the food-cycle. They could never proliferate in such large numbers. Now, because all the friendly insects have been killed by all those pesticides, only these exist. And every no-moon night, they lay eggs. Imagine the multiplier effect.*

Q. Tell us about your struggle.

A. *We have not reached here on this protest rally all of a sudden. We have been organizing ourselves under the banner of AIKS and AIAWU to assert our rights, claim compensation for crop failure, MSP, loan-waiver etc. You have seen the 48 hour dharna in Pune Collector's office, Thane struggle, Aurangabad Commissioner gherao, Kisan Long March to Mumbai and now this March to Parliament. Whenever we organize a protest, the government comes up with promises to pacify us and never fulfill those promises. We have understood this game of the government. We are in no mood to be duped any longer. The kisans of the country have woken up!*



# Mazdoor Kisan Rally

## Observations of an Outsider

Aruna

I reached Parliament Street with my seven year old daughter. It was 5<sup>th</sup> September; Teachers' Day. "Why should my daughter learn only in the class room" I said as I took her to see the Mazdoor Kisan rally, "Why shouldn't she learn from the world today?"

It was past 10 o'clock in the morning by the time we reached Parliament Street. The workers and peasants who had marched from the Ramlila Maidan were entering the venue of the meeting. People were reaching the place in never ending streams. Slowly I walked towards the dais holding my daughter by her hand. It was so crowded, there was no place even to keep one's feet. My daughter was a bit scared. "Ma, hold my hand tight, I may go missing in this crowd" she said. "Don't worry" I said carrying her on my shoulder, "Just look at the entire thing". She was amazed at the mass of people with red flags in their hands. "Let me down, ma, you will get tired; let us walk slowly to the end".

We were walking along looking at people when a woman smiled at me and caught hold of my hand. I sat beside her and started talking. She was a peasant from Nashik, talking in broken Hindi. "Is she your daughter? Have educated people also come to this rally?" she asked me. I laughed. "Be you happy always", she blessed me. Junnu, my daughter was looking at both of us alternately. The peasant woman continued, "A few months back we went to Mumbai; now we are in Delhi. This hell like life must change. Otherwise, it is better to die". Tears came to her eyes. Mine too. "Don't cry, nani" said Junnu. "She is not nani. She might be only a little older than me. She is aunty. She works in the fields day and night. That is why she looks old" I said.

A peasant woman who can't even have two square meals a day, blessing me to be happy! It touched my heart. Probably one engaged in cultivation in our country has to be optimistic, I thought. She told me many things about her life. She doesn't have any land of her own. The little land that they have is commonly owned by the family of her husband's brothers. They can't sustain on it. So, she works in others' fields.



A woman peasant from Bihar joined us. She told how women do most of work in agriculture but do not have ownership rights on the land. In joint families, husbands, brothers in law take loans without even the knowledge of women who are compelled to repay them

After talking with them for some time, we went ahead. A man with a wounded hand and blind in one eye was attentively listening to the speakers. I sat beside him. Junnu was a little afraid of him. I reassured her and took her into my lap. He heard us talking and said "Come, sit here, there is place". "What do you do?" I asked him. "Cook meals for school children. It is while cooking food that I sustained these burns" he showed his hand. "How much do you get?" "Rs 1000 per month; but only for ten months. We are not

*paid during the holidays. But even that is not paid every month regularly". "Do you eat in the school?" "No, no, it is against rules. We can't eat anything there. If we are caught, we will lose even this income". Junnu was surprised. "The dada who cooks food can't eat it? What are these rules, ma?" "He is not dada. May be he is a little older than your father. But he looks old because of lack of proper nutrition". "Ma, this is wrong. Those who cook should eat food". Her hesitation gone, she started walking effortlessly. "Ma, workers and peasants seem to be good, no?" she said suddenly.*

We continued our walk in the midst of the crowd talking to anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and others.

At the end a street play was going on. Junnu wanted to have a look. *'We gave you LPG'* the person acting as Modi was saying. *'What do we have to cook with it'* the peasant's character was asking. *'Drink cow's urine and do yoga'*. 'Yes, this is how our lives are' the peasants witnessing the play angrily lent their voices to the slogans being shouted by the actors. Junnu watched the play and the people with rapt attention. *"Ma, this Modi must be a bad man. He is making so many people cry"*.

An old friend was making a documentary of the rally. *'Can you help me'*, he asked *'I will do the camera work, you do the reporting'*. I agreed and took the mike. A group of old people from Punjab came to us and asked whether we would record their words. *'See, in 2014, they said we would have acche din, 56 inch chest would implement Swaminathan Committee report. Why is he not talking of these now? We are the age of Modi's mother and we continue to suffer'*. A worker from Chattisgarh said *'Bara sau me dum nahin; Athara hazar se kum nahin'*. *'We came here by collecting money from people in our village and neighbouring villages. Even some beggars gave us money when we told we were going to Delhi for the rally'*.

I saw a group of people with coarse soiled clothes keenly looking at the books in a small temporary book stall at the left side. While recording them I heard a man asking for Lenin's books. *'Where do you come from'* I asked the simple looking man. *'A peasant, from Madhya Pradesh'*, he said. *'People are breaking Lenin's statues. You are asking for Lenin's books?' 'Lenin is the friend of the exploited. I want to read his books'. 'But he is not from our country'. 'Lenin does not belong to any one country. He is the property of the toiling people like me'* he said looking with pity at my ignorance.

Some women were sharing the *sattu* that they had brought with them. On one side of the rally, two people with a cycle were selling pieces of fruit at Rs 30 a plate. That they were poor was quite visible. People who came from Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala were buying from them. An adivasi woman from Jharkhand was sitting with her little child near their bicycle. The child was showing the fruits to his mother indicating that he wanted to eat. She was trying to divert his attention. She did not have the money. One of the fruit vendors noticed this. He took a plate of fruit and gave to the child. *'Don't worry, you need not pay'* he said. I can never forget the look of gratitude that mother gave him.

It was close to 3 o'clock by the time the meeting came to end. I saw people from all states, with their different dresses, different languages, different expressions. But I noticed one thing which was common to them all. It was their questioning eyes. The same pain, the same anger, the same questions were visible in the eyes of almost every one of them. It was as if every one of them was declaring that they were not going to close their eyes till they achieve their rights.

# **Honorarium Increase for Anganwadi Workers and Helpers**

**T**he All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) congratulates anganwadi workers and helpers all over the country for forcing the Modi government to announce an increase in remuneration of anganwadi workers and helpers on the eve of the assembly elections in five states and also ahead of the next parliament election. This is the result of consistent struggles by the anganwadi employees for the last four years on their long pending demands under the leadership of AIFAWH and also under the joint platform of Central trade unions including the **Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018 in which nearly fifty thousand anganwadi workers and helpers participated. AIFAWH had collected nearly three crore signatures from beneficiaries on these long pending demands.**

The Prime Minister announced an increase in remuneration of anganwadi workers by Rs.1500 per month, mini anganwadi workers by Rs.1250 per month and workers Rs.750 per month, making it Rs.4500 pm, Rs.3500 pm and Rs.2250 pm respectively. Considering the anti labour policies of the government, this is a great achievement of the worker's struggles.

The Modi Government, which is now pretending to be the champion of combating malnutrition has been continuously cutting down the budget allocation for ICDS. Even today, in most of the states the wages of anganwadi workers and helpers are pending and the nutrition supply is stopped for last 3-6 months due to lack of funds. We reiterate our resolve to fight against the policies of the Modi government of winding up and privatising the schemes which provide basic services to the people.

AIFAWH is proud that in the last three years (2016-2018), our struggles could make every state government and now the government of India also increase the wages of anganwadi workers and helpers. We are sure that this will give more confidence not only to the anganwadi employees in their struggle for achieving their demands but also to the struggles of all working people-workers, agricultural workers and peasantry. We call upon the anganwadi workers and helpers throughout the country to be prepared for more militant struggles for our basic rights in the coming days including the two days general strike as announced by the central trade unions.

## **Incentives of ASHA Workers to be Doubled**

**T**he AICCAW welcomes the announcement made by the Prime Minister doubling the incentives paid to the ASHA workers. The recognition of the services by the ASHA workers in his speech and the increase in incentives is the result of the consistent struggles by ASHA workers of the country, led by the CITU. We demand that the Modi government immediately implement the recommendations of the 45<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference – recognition of all scheme workers as workers, Rs.18000 per month minimum wages, social security and pension.

Modi's declaration on the eve of the assembly elections in five states, without addressing the basic issues of the ASHA workers, is out of compulsion due to militant struggles of ASHA workers in various states and the recent Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally. The insurance schemes declared by the Prime Minister for ASHA workers are existing government schemes.

The AICCAW strongly condemns this piece rate charity attitude of the government towards the ASHA workers, and warns that their struggles will be intensified and continued until they get all their rights and benefits as regular workers.

AICCAW calls upon the ASHA workers to be prepared for further struggles for their long pending demands, including the two days general strike declared by the central trade unions.



# MDMWFI Protests

**Modi Government had cheated 25 lakh Mid Day Meal Workers  
MDMWFI will organize protest throughout the country on 24 September 2018**

Nearly 25 lakh Mid Day Meal Workers working under the school Mid Day Meal Scheme play a crucial role in combating the malnutrition in the country. The **Modi led BJP Government had done injustice to these grass root level by not increasing their remuneration.** MDMWFI demands immediate increase in the wages of Mid Day Meal workers and implementation of the decisions of the 45<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour conference – recognition as workers, minimum wages Rs.18000 per month and pension and social security.

After four years of continuous struggles including the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally on 5<sup>th</sup> September, the Prime Minister was forced to announce a small increase in the wages of the Anganwadi workers, helpers and incentives of ASHA workers, but was silent on the basic demands of recognition and minimum wages. Mid Day meal workers, the majority of whom are women from socially backward sections, work for six hours a day and get a meagre salary of Rs.1000 per month for ten months a year. They play a crucial role in combating malnutrition, but they and their families are unable to combat their own malnutrition. They have been totally ignored even in this latest announcement by Modi government.

**To protest against the callous attitude of Modi Government the MDMWFI will organize protest demonstrations throughout the country at block, district centres on 24 September 2018 and will give a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India.**

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## 8 lakh 2 thousand Infants Died in India last year

Infant deaths were the highest in the world in India, followed by Nigeria, Pakistan and Congo. Lack of access to water, sanitation, proper nutrition and basic health services resulted in 802,000 infant deaths in India in 2017, despite the government's programmes on sanitation, health and nutrition, a report by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) revealed.

Infant deaths in India remained the highest in the world, said the estimates released by Unicef, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Division and the World Bank Group.

*"Millions of babies and children should not still be dying every year from lack of access to water, sanitation, proper nutrition or basic health services,"* said, assistant director-general for family, women and children's health at WHO.

The report highlighted that most children under the age of five die because of preventable or treatable causes such as complications during birth, pneumonia, diarrhoea, neonatal sepsis and malaria.

(Courtesy: The Mint)

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## Two Ace Athletes



**S**wapna Barman fought tooth-and-twelve-nails to win India's first-ever Asian Games gold medal in **Heptathlon**. Seven gruelling events over three days for a medal always take an extreme toll on an athlete's body, more so for Swapna, who faces the perennial problem of having to run with ill-fitting shoes that always pinch the six toes on each of her feet. What the 21-year-old from Jalpaiguri was not prepared for at Jakarta was a tooth infection flaring up after a root canal treatment, leaving her with a pounding pain, forcing her to stick a kinesio tape around her right jaw.

Heptathlon was not meant to be an octathlon — with tooth trouble thrown into the mix. She loves chocolates and rosogulla, but a dentist's chair that will be her first port of call after her sensational gold medal. Swapna played football and kabaddi during her school years in Jalpaiguri. Her father, a rickshaw-puller, suffered a stroke in 2013 and has been bed-ridden since then. Her mother worked as a tea picker on an estate.

Swapna started out as a high jumper, but was told that she was too short to carry on in the event. Picked for a SAI trial after two rejections in 2011 and 2012, she broadened her repertoire and focussed on sharpening disciplines she was already good at, even as the unique challenge with the added toes started to cut into her leg movements.

*"It pains all the time, I've struggled to get shoes for my six toes all my life,"* she said. It's not just during competition, even the training leaves her with traumatised feet. She has met a clutch of doctors and experts, been in rehab for ages, but sneaked in a gold medal at the Asiad in the middle of all these afflictions.

*"It's bad with shoes, it's worse with spikes,"* she said, saying that the gold medals also bring with them months of homesickness, adding that her family broke down and cried after she won the gold.

Swapna is now the only earning member of the family. Asked how her family has coped with financial difficulties, she said, *"Main Hoon Na."*

**Harish Kumar** represented India in **Sepak Takraw** at the Asian Games 2018. Not many in India knew about the sport till he helped his team return from Indonesia with a bronze. However, nothing has changed for Harish Kumar, who has gone back to selling tea at New Delhi's Majnu Ka Tila.

Son of an auto-rickshaw driver, Harish sells tea in Delhi to make both ends meet before leaving for practice in the afternoon. While various state governments promised cash rewards as well as government jobs to the Asian Games medallists, Harish Kumar continues with his daily struggles, hoping for a good job in order to support his family.



Harish said, *"I have many family members and there is a very meagre source of income. I help my father at the tea shop to support my family. I dedicate four hours every day between 2 to 6 for my practice. For my future, I want to get a good job to support my family."* *"I started playing this sport from 2011. My coach Hemraj brought me into this sport. We also used to play with a tyre when my coach Hemraj spotted me and introduced me to the Sports Authority of India, after which I started receiving monthly funds and kits. I practice every day and will keep on doing it to bring more laurels for my country,"* he said.

## CITU Strongly Condemns the Raids on and Arrests of the Dalit and Human Rights Activists

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions strongly condemns the raids and arrests of the Dalit and Human Rights activists by the Maharashtra government and central agencies all over the country on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018. This is nothing but a blatant attempt to silence the dissident opinions and views which are an integral part of any democratic political system worth the name. Moreover the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act was also being invoked so as to browbeat the surging democratic opposition to the anti working people and anti national policies of the government.

As CITU is an important constituent of Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA), it will participate in the agitation going to be held on August 30<sup>th</sup> on Parliament street to condemn these fascistic attacks. We call upon all the democratic minded people and organizations of this country to come forward to condemn and resist these authoritarian onslaughts.



Protest at Parliament Street- 30th August 2018



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