

The Government Should Immediately Revoke All Central Acts And Bills Which Completely Destroy Agriculture

Friends,

The threat to Federalism in India is at its greatest. The BJP-led NDA government at the Center is usurping all the powers of the States, day by day. Any party that is ruling in any state is brought to its knees or silenced by using all methods and subduing all autonomous institutions including judiciary. The attack on federalism is from all fronts. The GST tax system has broken the finances of the states; New legislations are not only meant to take control of natural resources from States but also to easily evict tribals and forest dwellers from their natural dwellings; Even control on education including medical education is being snatched from States; The centre is intensifying its grip on land under different names like Coastal Regulation Zones [CRZ] etc. But the burden of natural disasters like floods and epidemics is being pushed on to the states. There are countless examples of this, even the most recent global pandemic, corona, is left to the States.

To the opposition from some states. They are part of a conspiracy by the Center to divert India's river and water resources into the hands of multinational corporations.

The Constitution of India stipulates that water is a matter of the states. If these bills are legislated the water control will go entirely within the purview of the Center. In the words of Vandana Siva, it opens the door to water wars in India. Through these three bills, the rights over rivers and dams in the hands of States will be completely transferred to the Centre.

1. River Basin Management Bill – 2019 :

According to this Bill, Chief ministers of 13 river basin states are reduced to advisors, public representatives as consultants and both are part of a body called 'council', while the bureaucrats who are controlled by the center, constitutes the 'authority'. Thus, States

Join the Bandh and Agitations on 25th September 2020

An unprecedented number of anti-people policies and Bills have been passed to feed our entire Industrial Sector and valuable lands to the multinationals to plunder the wealth and labour of our people. Everything from seed to market is privatized in the agricultural sector. It is done in such a way that agriculture became unaffordable to the millions of small and middle-class farmers. These peasants, who are providing food security for a nation of 130 crores are resorting to suicides unable to have a sustainable living. Three Anti Farmer And Anti Agriculture Acts are passed in the parliament which were brought in to hand over market yards to Big Corporates. Bills are proposed to take over the control on electricity from the States by the Draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020. Now the Center is conspiring in Parliament to grab the right on water and water resources to sell them permanently to its corporate masters. The three bills on the rivers, the most dangerous ones, which have been introduced in Parliament and the Rajya Sabha in the past but expired, are again getting ready to introduce in the parliament but held back due to lose their right to develop, protect, and distribute water in these river basins.

2. River Water Dispute Bill - 2019:

The present practise of resolving interstate water disputes is setting up of a tribunal by the Central Water Board. This too at the request of the State/States. Contrary to this, all the river disputes in the country were created by the rulers. Since 1956, River Water Dispute tribunals were setup for Krishna, Godavari, Narmada, Cauvery and Ravi rivers. It took 33 years for the Ravi- Beas tribunal and 29 years for Cauvery tribunal to submit their reports. These were dragged for years to divert people's attention from fundamental issues. So, over the years some of these problems –Cauvery dispute between Karnataka and Tamilnadu, Godavari disputed between combined state of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, and the upcoming disputes between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana – are all fanned and perpetuated by the rulers. Now, new laws are being brought, in the name of providing solutions. Under the new law, there will be four members on a select committee to appoint a tribunal to resolve disputes between states. The Prime Minister, two Union Cabinet Ministers and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Neither the states nor their engineering departments have the minimum information. The role of the judiciary is minimal. The new bill appears to have reduced the period for setting up tribunal for consultation, from 5 years to one year. But the center's Suo moto power to setup

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tribunal without any request from states is enough for the BJP rulers to create water wars between the states whenever they want. It can make 100s of similar disputes like the Mandir-Masjid across the country through this disputes bill.

3. Dam Safety Authority Bill - 2019:

There are 5745 small and large reservoirs in the country. 293 of which are over a hundred years old. 25 percent of dams are less than 50 to 100 years old. 40 dams have been washed away since 1947. The accident at Machu dam in Rajkot district of Gujarat in 1979, which entered the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest dam failure, claimed thousands of lives. The government estimates itself say that in all projects in the country- small, large and multi-purpose - silt has accumulated to 30-40 per cent of their capacity due to lack of minimum maintenance.

The Dams Safety bill proposes a central authority for Dam's safety which means the states' autonomy over major irrigation dams in their territories will be grabbed by the Centre. This bill will avoid mentioning about protection of dams and their cost. Thus, Dams are going to face more disasters between the center and states. This bill would pave the way for centre to take over and privatize Genco [power generation], the only remaining one in power sector.

The purpose of these laws is to bring the country's entire agricultural sector and farming under complete control of the centre. The bills are driven by deals of foreign multi-national giants in food and agri- businesses with desi companies like Reliance, by making multi-billion-dollar investments and buying equities in them.

Drinking water was first privatized in India. Small local ponds, drinking and irrigation water sources were damaged as per the plan. Tribal farming in the forests and hillslopes was destroyed in the name of development. Ten to fifteen kilometers of streams and canals created by the ebbs and tides along the coast that are under use for coastal farming were destroyed in the name of various industrial corridors and ports. Rivers that carry sweet water with varied minerals have been ceded to companies such as Coca-Cola. The peasants living along these rivers are continuously harassed. They are pulled to courts and threatened by judiciary. These private players have adapted entire agriculture sector to their advantage utilizing the massive irrigation projects. Yet millions of peasants and laborers in this country are continuing in agriculture to live with self-respect. So far, the water from these projects are used by peasants for agriculture. Now these Anti Agriculture Acts and bills will allow foreign companies to take over the control of these projects and plunder our farmers by charging every litre of water, showing the devotion of our comprador ruling parties towards their imperialist lords. All this in the name of patriotism is a travesty. Governments are on the constant search for new disputes – nation, religion, region, water – time to time, to divide and divert people from real problems.

Bills were already passed to transfer millions of acres of land and forests in the country to corporate companies, now to plunder our water for their Industries these bills will be enacted into laws. States were already given direction to measure every litre of water that flows into the canals of the tenant and small farmers who are challenging this corporate order; orders were already given to measure every unit of current received by these peasants. All the laws and policies in the last five-and-a-half years are part of a more drastic implementation of pro-imperialist comprador policies that have made agriculture unsustainable and turned farmers into labourers. We now have to face these latest bills that are going to become Acts.

The Karnataka Rajya Rythu Sangh demands the immediate withdrawal of anti farmer Acts and proposed bills in the parliament. We appeal to the peasantry and the masses to protest by all means to repeal these Acts and bills and also Join the Bharat Bandh on 25th September 2020 against Anti Farmer and Anti Agriculture Acts and Bills.

**Karnataka Rajya Rythu Sangh
(Affiliated to AIKMKS)**

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