

Report on the Recent Punjab Kisan Movement

It was in the month of April that 22 peasant organisations of Punjab affiliated to SKM decided to fight for long standing and very crucial issues and demands of peasants and people of Punjab. They listed 13 demands and met Punjab Chief Minister, who assured to look into it. Again they had another round of talks in the end of April which were very disappointing as govt had shown very negative attitude towards it.

So, SKM Punjab decided to launch agitation and stage indefinite dharna at Chandigarh from 17 May 2022. Preparations were made and they found great enthusiasm among the peasants. Here it should be noted that all the unions who had participated in elections violating the SKM line, remained silent spectators, though many of them had split and their cadres either joined other SKM affiliates or some floated their own and got affiliation with SKM.

As decided, about 2000 peasants on their tractor trolleys with ration for 4 months, beddings, fans, coolers even fridges reached Mohali, the border of Chandigarh on the morning of 17 May while others were to join them the next day. They assembled at Gurdwara Amb Sahib in Mohali and started towards Chandigarh which is hardly 3 kms away. On the way Punjab police had erected multi layered barricades and parked tippers at two places in Punjab jurisdiction, next to it Chandigarh Police had erected barricades at 5 places to stop the peasants. At first peasants had scuffle at barricade and ultimately they succeeded in breaking it and proceeded forward where one more barrier was erected with heavy deployment of police and commandos along with teargas and water cannons. At this point senior police official requested the peasants with folded hands not to go ahead as CM has called for a meeting with them tomorrow. But peasants decided not to go back and started dharna there and declared that if meeting is not held tomorrow and their demands are not met they will start indefinite dharna there and it will become another Singhu border. They spent the night in the open. People from Mohali served them with lassi, jaljeera, cold water and other drinks to beat the scorching heat.

On the morning of 18th May CM conducted meeting with SKM Punjab leaders, which lasted for 3 hours.

The Demands Discussed and Accepted Included:

- Govt. should declare the MSP for Moong, Maize and Basmati.
- Govt. agreed and issued notification the same day, later Union govt. also accepted and MSP for Moongi was declared Rs. 7275 per quintal.

- Compensation of Rs. 500 per quintal to farmers as yield has dropped 30% due to heat, because of early setting of summer.
CM promised to take up the issue with centre.
- Stop installing prepaid meters with chip. CM agreed.
- Stop vacating peasants settled on govt land of Kandi area (long back marginal peasants of Kandi area – uncultivable govt. land stretched in a 161 km wide belt in semi-hilly areas in Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Ropar and Fatehgarh Sahib districts in the foothills of Shivalik ranges - encouraged by the govt worked hard and made it cultivable, now they are settled on it for generations but govt has not given them legal rights yet, though promised by various govts from time to time.) Peasants demanded halting of eviction orders and for transfer of this land to the tillers.
- CM agreed and it was decided to hold meeting with Panchayat minister to work out modalities on 23rd May.
- Peasants demanded that the state govt. should take steps and ask Union govt. to reverse its decision of removing permanent members of Punjab and Haryana from BBMB, to which CM agreed to take up the issue seriously.
- They demanded to provide electricity from central pool.
- Demand to advance all paddy sowing dates from 18th and 24th of June to 10th of June and increase canal water supply for sowing paddy. It was accepted.
- Demand to reduce the fee for increasing load of agriculture motors from Rs. 4800 to 1200/- ... CM Agreed.
- Stop confiscation of land of loan defaulted peasants, withdraw cases against 22000 peasants, and write off loans to peasants. CM agreed to it.
- Release the pending dues of Rs. 35 per quintal to Sugar cane farmers. The CM has agreed.

The latest Punjab farmers' agitation is a testimony to the fact that if any agitation goes to the people on a mass scale, with active public participation it will be able to reap immediate as well as long-term benefits. Accustomed to the culture of struggles and empowered with the experience of the nation-wide movement against the three black farm laws the peasants of Punjab were able to achieve these temporary demands within a very short period of time. Such massive struggles have to be waged across the country for preventing the exploitative policies of pro-imperialist multinational companies from encroaching agriculture.