

Farmers Protest Meeting at Bangalore and Talks with RBI officials

A protest meeting and discussions with RBI officials was held on 29.3.23 at Freedom Park, Bangalore under the leadership of AIKMKS affiliate Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene against the exploitative usury agricultural loans by Karnataka Gramin Bank.

The meeting was inaugurated with a peasant song sung by farmers from more than 15 districts of the state. At 11o' clock, Chaganur Mallikarjuna Reddy who presided over the meeting gave the inaugural speech. Later, Raitha Sangha State President R. Madhav Reddy spoke about the various protest movements that have been going on for the past one year against the usury loans of the Gramin Bank and about the indefinite day and night dharna that completed 100 days in front of the head office of the bank in Bellary, where people from each village are participating for one day each. He explained about Rythu Chaitanya (farmer education) Yatra and people's response to it. The yatra was carried out from March 6th to March 29th in 22 districts, carrying out agitations in tens of Gramin bank branches. Leaders from various organizations and farmers' unions spoke in support of this struggle.

Farmer representatives Madhava Reddy, Mallikarjuna Reddy, Kumara Samatala, Nagaratnamma and Manje Gowda went for discussions with Reserve Bank officials. The representatives asked the RBI officials how it is possible for the farmers who are losing their crops to pay an whopping 33 lakh rupees as principal and interest against a borrowed amount of just Rs. 3 lakh rupees. The representatives discussed with RBI officials about Gramin bank's practice of showing book balance separately and total debt separately after identifying an account as NPA and threatening to auction the lands of farmers in the name of Reserve Bank rules. They questioned them why the farmers NPAs are treated differently from Corporate NPAs? RBI officials told that no one has brought this issue to their attention so far, that they will discuss with the bankers and do justice, and since this is a policy issue, they suggested to bring this to the attention of the government. The delegation also sent letters of appeal to officials of Canara Bank, the sponsor bank of Karnataka Gramin Bank and NABARD, the agriculture and rural bank.

Farmers and farmers union leaders decided to continue the agitation till the problem is solved and resolved to question the ruling political parties which come to the villages for votes. The meeting concluded with slogans around these resolutions.

**State Committee,
Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene**