

Peasants' Rage over Sudden Cessation of Irrigation Water Supplies – Ballari Bandh Successful

The Ballari district, bordering A.P, is located in Karnataka State, ruled by the Congress Party. This district, along with Kurnool and Anantapur of A.P, receives irrigation water from the HLC and LLC of the Tungabhadra Project.

Though there is a deficit of rainfall in these districts, farmers have gone ahead for cultivation in about 4 lakh acres with the hope of getting water from Tungabhadra. They have invested huge amounts - about 1 lakh rupees per acre, especially for crops like Mirchi. In this situation, the Karnataka government announced that it is not possible to supply irrigation water to the crops after November 5th and the available water will be diverted to the needs of industries like Jindal. This announcement of the government infuriated the farmers, and on Oct 31st, 2023, about 2000 farmers along with 100 tractors agitated at the Ballari District Collector Office against the government decision. This caused the government to extend the date of the cessation of water to November 10th. Opposing the officials and government's decision, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha & Hasiru Sena (AIKMKS affiliated) gave a call to the people to observe Ballari District Bandh on November 10th.

There is a tremendous response to the bandh call from people of all walks of life. The activists of the organization extensively toured about 100 villages, creating awareness among people and distributing pamphlets to make the bandh a success. On November 10th, different unions, businessmen, workers, and general public, including the transgender community participated and made the bandh a success. All of them supported the farmers' struggle for the protection of their crops. In 4-5 circles, the roads are completely blocked by tractors. From the morning itself, about 6,000 farmers from 100 villages arrived to participate in bandh. The organization leadership led the struggle from the forefront.

An indefinite dharna was started before the district collector office. By evening, the DC and in-charge minister arrived at the Dharna site and held discussions with the agitators. The discussions resulted in assurances by the government for the supply of irrigation water up to Nov 20th. With this assurance, the struggle was temporarily suspended. Sensing the mood of resentment and anger among farmers, the Govt administration came down and declared to supply irrigation water till the crops were completely irrigated.

The leadership of the organisation expressed its appreciation to the farmers for successfully launching the struggle on time and protecting thousands of their families from losing crores of rupees.