

Farmers, Workers Resolve to Continue Fighting, Focus on People's Suffering Amid COVID-19 Second Wave

Via [Newsclick Report](#)

As the country continues to be ravaged by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the workers' and farmers' organisations have resolved to continue their fight against the "common enemy" and to continue to speak up about the government's failure in managing the COVID-19 crisis as well as protecting the workers and farmers.

With the onset of the second wave, the challenges faced by these groups are somewhat new, even as their demands remain the same. On Saturday, in an online meeting organised jointly by Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), and All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWAU) a discussion was held to focus on the "current situation" and "our tasks".

While formulating a two-point programme – providing relief to the people in distress and fighting – the leaders of the organisations reiterated the need to "intensify" the ongoing struggles.

Tapan Sen, general secretary, CITU, said that currently, in the country, there are two types of emergency situations; first is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and another one because of the "attack on the livelihoods of the people".

"Lakhs of jobs have been lost and workers are not being paid their wages in many parts of the country right now... However, it is exactly in these times that the Modi government is

concerned with increasing profits for its corporate friends,” he said, adding that the government’s attitude only shows its “barbarous bend of mind”.

Sen stressed on how the situation is equally grim on the health front, with sub-optimal medical infrastructure in the country facing additional strain in the wake of rise in the number of COVID-19 cases.

Calling for a joint effort of all the three organisations to “provide relief to the people in distress” right up to the “grass root levels” in these times, Sen said that assistance work by the union members, just like last year, will soon begin with regards to “food ration” and “COVID-related medical supply” demands.

Ashok Dhawale, president, AIKS flayed the Modi government for “using” the pandemic period to bring in labour and agricultural reform-oriented legislations. He was referring to the [farm laws](#) and [labour codes](#).

Dhawale also questioned the Centre’s decision to continue with the [Central Vista Project](#) and the usage of the funds collected under [PM-CARES](#). “We must take these talking points to the people and organise them to fight the policies of the Modi government,” he said.

Dhawale, who has also remained active during the ongoing farmers’ protests at Delhi borders, further hinted at the nationwide protest on May 26 – the day marking six months of the farmers’ protests.

In June last year, PM Modi gave a [clarion call](#) to ‘turn the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity’. It was preceded by, above all, a new Public Sector Enterprises Policy under which all public firms, barring a maximum of four state-owned companies in strategic sectors, were set to be privatised.

In the face of it, workers’ and farmers’ groups – fighting

respectively against the four labour codes and the three farm legislations – sought to unify their struggle.

The attempts to forge this unity gained momentum in August last year, when on August 7, a call to observe the '[Save India Day](#)' by the national platform of Central Trade Unions (CTUs) was also supported by All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), which consists of 250 farmers' unions from across the country. Similarly, when the latter called for a countrywide 'Rail Roko-Rasta Roko' [protest](#) on September 25, the trade unions declared their unstinting support to the programme.

Moreover, after a first joint meeting of its kind between the leadership of CTUs and AIKSCC back in November last year, solidarity was extended for workers' [general strike](#) and farmers' [Delhi Chalo](#) by both the groups.

Sen of CITU on Saturday stressed the need to "intensify" these movements in the coming days. "Our weapons are defiance and resistance and we must not allow the Modi government to destroy the national resources," he said.

B Venkat, general secretary, AIAWU criticised the Modi government for its "anti-poor" COVID-19 vaccine policy that will only "worsen" the ongoing health crisis in the country. He urged the Centre to ensure free vaccines for all.