

## Workers March in Delhi Against Anti-worker Labour Codes and Privatization

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*Thousands of workers from every corner of the country swarmed to raise their voices in unison at the Ramlila Grounds in New Delhi, as part of Mazdoor Aakrosh Rally organized by Mazdoor Adhikar Sangharsh Abhiyan (MASA). We must salute the workers and organisations for braving all odds to do just what the doctor ordered, with the state of the economy and condition of working class aggravating at an unprecedented scale. The spirit of resistance shimmered sky high with revolutionary slogans and demands representing workers from the vast sphere of industries and regions of the country in attendance at the march as the ground was transformed from a spark into a prairie fire, with thousands of red flags fluttering.*

The program was the culmination of a sustained, qualitative four month long agitational campaign on six central demands, engulfing many regions of the country. The campaign was undertaken both jointly and independently by the constituent organizations of MASA at factory gates, labour lines, fields, mines and industrial areas across the country. Three regional conventions were held in Kolkata, Hyderabad and Delhi in build up to the march.

The march was a testimony of the growing discontent within the working class in India, being placed in dire straits with rising cost of living, wages falling and escalating unemployment and social insecurity. Slogans for working class unity confronting communal divisions, regional and sectoral differences were also raised. Such diverse sections of the country's working class coming together as an organised force struck a bell in the ears of the central and state governments. The spirit of unity and camaraderie in the march is bound to instill renewed energy among all who participated in the demonstration, to organise the working class and counter the unchecked capitalist exploitation engulfing India and the entire globe.

The workers confronted heavy police deployment with Delhi police declaring section 144

and barricading despite having notified the administration months in advance of the program. The workers heroically overpowered two rounds of barricading to block the main Jawaharlal Nehru Marg towards New Delhi railway station. A delegation submitted the memorandum containing the six central demands to the President's office. The rally was concluded with a resolve to consolidate and broaden the scope of the platform and relentlessly wage a continuous working class struggle to challenge the neoliberal policies of the government.

Workers demanded the withdrawal of the four new anti-worker labour codes passed by the Indian government; an end to the privatisation drive of public industries and assets; permanent and secure employment for all; Rs. 26,000 as minimum monthly wage; a monthly unemployment allowance of Rs 15,000; declaration of lay-offs, closures and retrenchments as illegal; abolition of the contract system and various kinds of temporary employment; recognition of domestic-gig-scheme workers under labour laws; job security, housing, healthcare, child care for all migrant and rural workers and universal PDS. Over five thousand workers, students and teachers from 18 states including Delhi NCR, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Himachal, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Gujarat thronged into the capital for the protest.

The Rally was addressed by representatives from the sixteen constituent organisations of MASA, i.e. All India Workers Council, Grameen Mazdoor Union (Bihar), Indian Council of Trade Unions (ICTU), Indian Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), IFTU (Sarwahara), Inqlabi Mazdoor Kendra, Inqlabi Mazdoor Kendra Punjab, Jan Sangharsh Manch Haryana, Karnataka Shramika Shakthi, Lal Jhanda Mazdoor Union (Samanvay Samiti), Mazdoor Sahayata Samiti, Mazdoor Sahyog Kendra, New Democratic Labour Front-State Coordination Committee (NDLF SCC Tamilnadu), Socialist Workers Centre (Tamilnadu), Struggling Workers Coordination Centre (SWCC, West Bengal), Trade Union Centre of India (TUCI). Cultural performances by teams from Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and West Bengal energised the rally with songs of struggle and transformation.

The spirit of resistance shimmered in the air with revolutionary slogans and demands representing workers from the vast sphere of industries and regions of the country in attendance at the march as the ground was transformed from a spark into a prairie fire, with thousands of red flags fluttering. The protest was joined by organised private sector workers from automobile, engineering, textile, garment and food processing industries including the struggling terminated workers of Maruti Suzuki, the Maruti Suzuki Workers' Union, Belsonnica Employees Union and contract workers from Sunbeam and Hitachi in Haryana; Daikin Air Conditioner Workers' Union and Daido Mazdoor Union from Neemrana, Rajasthan; Bhagwati Micromax, Nestle, Parle, Rocket Riddhi Siddhi, Kirolia Lighting, Voltas, Intrark and other unions from Uttarakhand; unions from Hindi Motors, Kanoria Jute Mill, Bauria Cotton Mills and other units from West Bengal and Steel and Molding Workers Union (Punjab); Workers from public sector enterprises including BHEL (Uttarakhand), BSNL (WB), Eastern Coalfields Limited (WB), Singareni Collieries Company Limited (Telangana) and Indian Railways (Easter UP); Tea Plantation workers from Jakai, Nahorkotia, Gotonga, Naginijan, Jaipur, Samuguri, Hautley, Furkating and Missamara Tea Estates in Assam and Margaret's Hope, Dhotrey, Baghrakote, Phulbari and Peshok Tea Gardens from Darjeeling joined the rally in significant numbers. Unions of rural workers and urban unorganized sectors such as Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union (Haryana), MGNREGA and Sarva Kamgar Union (Himachal Pradesh), Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha Mazdoor Karyakarta Samiti (Chhattisgarh),

Rural Employees Union (Haryana), Nirman Mazdoor Sangharsh Union (Bihar) and others among MNREGA, Sanitation, Construction, Domestic work, Anganwadi, Mid-day meal, IT-ITES, gig workers, loading-unloading and private transport from different states gave a fitting boost to the march. The mobilisation witnessed a strong presence of women workers.

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It is vital that the tempo does not subside to painstakingly educate the working class politically and consistently undertaking qualitative programmes. Economism has to be battled at the very root and demands of trade union movement must be linked with the movement against Hindutva proto-fascism. Workers must be prepared to counter the fascist threat to organising itself.

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