

Brief report

Rally for the Right to Food

26 November 2009 Time: 9.am-5.pm

A rally from Mandi house to Parliament Street followed by public meeting at Jantar Mantar demanding the passage of a comprehensive Food Entitlements Act and immediate & effective interventions in drought stricken areas.

Organized by

The Right to Food Campaign-Secretariat, India
5A, Jungi House, Shahpur Jat, New Delhi-110049
Phone: 011-26499563, Email: righttofood@gmail.com
www.righttofoodindia.org

More than 5000 people from 18 states, representing a wide range of grassroots organisations, came together for a rally and public meeting in New Delhi on 26 November 2009.

Roti ka guarantee abhi do..abhi do

Bhojan adhikar kanoon banao, janta ke prati farz nibhao

Desh ko banane waley mazdoor, bhukhey kyun, jawab do..jawab do..

Shouting slogans like these across the *power roads* of Delhi, and displaying hundreds of banners with demands and signatures from across India, the participants demanded legal food entitlements in the face of structural hunger and malnutrition in India. The people gathered also demanded urgent intervention in 278 drought affected districts across India.

The participating groups assembled at JNU city centre, Ferozshah road, Mandi house till 12.30pm and marched towards Parliament Street after finishing registration formalities and collecting food packets. Five thousand eight hundred (5,800) numbers of participants representing fifty eight (58) network and organisations were registered.

They marched nearly 3 kms from Mandi House to Parliament Street shouting slogans, and songs of despair and demands echoing the state of agriculture hit by drought, ineffective public

distribution system, lax government policies and welfare schemes before culminating in a demonstration cum public meeting at Parliament Street near the police station. On their way, volunteers created awareness on the issue by distributing pamphlets and interacting with motorists and passers-by.

The public meeting anchored by Annie Raja, Arundhati Dhuru, Anuradha Talwar and Kavita Srivastava saw speakers from different states/networks/organisations presenting and sharing their concerns vis-a vis demands in tune with the broader demands of the Right to Food Campaign.

The speakers included Anjali Bhardwaj (National Campaign for People's Right to Information, NCPRI), Ashok Chaudhury (National Forum for Forest Workers and Forest People, NFFPFW), Uttam (New Trade Union Initiative, NTUI), Bhupendra Rawat (National Alliance for people's Movement, NAPM), Bela (Disabilities Forum), Chajju Ram (Roji Roti Adhikar Abhiyan, Rajasthan), Dipa Sinha (Working Group on Children under Six), Ganga Ram Paikra (Chhattisgarh Kisan Majdoor Andolan), Jawahar Mehta (Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, Jharkhand), K.K. Roy (Human Rights Law Network, HRLN), Laxman Dasari (Right to Food Campaign, Maharashtra), Madhuri Krishnaswamy (Jagrit Adhivasi Dalit Sangathan), Rachpal Kaur (National Federation of Indian Women, NFIW), Rahul (Koshish Charitable Trust, Bihar), N.B. Sarojini (Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, JSA), Sanjeev Kumar (National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, NCDHR), Sejal Dand (Anandi, Gujarat), and Vinay (Delhi Forces), among others.

Various songs and slogans on the issue were organised by teams from UP, Gujarat, and NFIW. Creative demonstration on the sky-rocketing prices of essential commodities organised by Sameer Garg and Gangabhai from Chhattisgarh along with Reetika Khara drew good public attention.

The stage was also shared by some invited Members of Parliament and leaders of different political parties like Brinda Karat (CPM) and D.Raja (CPI), who promised to raise these issues in the parliament soon by broadly endorsing the collective demands of the right to food campaign. The RTFC secretariat also received acknowledgement letters from various MPs who were invited for the rally but unable to attend. A delegation consisting of Annie Raja, Jean Dreze and Kavita Srivastava met Dr M Veerappa Moily, Law Minister on 2nd December, 2009 with the message of the rally and the broader demands of the campaign.

Numbers of media reported the mass rally with brief reports and pictures. Some details below:

Pre rally

a) The Hindu- <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/article54697.ece>

Post Rally

a) The Hindu, Tribune, Jansatta, Haribhumi and Virat Vaibhav carried pictures of the rally

b) Rashtriya Sahara - 2-column report with photograph

c) Dainik Jagran - 2 column report with photograph

d) Nai Duniya - 2-column report, no photograph

e) Hamara Mahanagar - 3-column report with photograph

f) CNN –IBN-Report <http://ibnlive.in.com/videos/106044/govt-dithers-as-india-asks-where-is-right-to-food.html>

g) NDTV- Report- http://www.ndtv.com/news/videos/video_player.php?id=1179986

IANS (news agency)

Web

a) India E News - <http://www.indiaenews.com/india/20091126/234048.htm> and many others including some blogs.