

## **AIDWA CALLS FOR NATIONWIDE PROTESTS TO CONDEMN ANTI-WOMEN MODI REGIME**

### **Mariam Dhawale**

The AIDWA CEC held recently in Hyderabad decided to organise protests in all districts in the country on December 10, International Human Rights Day, to condemn the anti-women Modi regime. These protests will highlight the issues of violence, food security and unemployment, which were taken up in a big way by the AIDWA's 10,000-strong All India Delhi Rally on September 4. State and district level issues too will be taken up in these protests. Thousands of women will be mobilised in these protest actions.

The CEC has decided to prepare a poster exhibition and a booklet to expose the false promises of the Modi government. This exhibition and booklet will be released on Savitribai Phule birth anniversary, January 3, 2019, when all state committees will organise multifarious programmes to propagate progressive values and counter the retrograde ideology of the RSS.

### **Campaign on Sabarimala Temple Entry Issue**

AIDWA had welcomed the judgment of the Supreme Court in the Sabarimala case which has allowed the entry of women of all ages into the temple.

AIDWA Joint Secretary Sathi Devi explained the issue of entry for women of all ages in the Sabarimala Temple. She dwelt on the history of the reform movement in Kerala and the struggle for temple entry for Dalits. AIDWA welcomed the positive approach of the LDF government in Kerala in implementing the Supreme Court judgement. The RSS-BJP is trying to communalise and vitiate the atmosphere in Kerala by mobilising people against this judgement. They are indulging in terror tactics, goondaism and abuse and are threatening activists and disturbing peace in Kerala. The Congress in Kerala is also playing an opportunist role. The CEC commended the efforts of the AIDWA in Kerala for bravely going among women to expose the false propaganda of the RSS-BJP. AIDWA will carry out a countrywide campaign to explain its stand on this issue.

### **Campaign against Sexual Harassment at Workplace**

The incidents of sexual harassment at the workplace that have recently come to light through the #MeToo campaign has starkly brought out the vulnerability of women especially in the media and film industry. Leading media and film personalities have been accused of this crime. AIDWA has expressed support to the victims and stands by them in their struggle for justice. Women in the unorganised sector and in rural areas also face sexual exploitation with no mechanism for redressal. AIDWA has been taking up these issues and will intensify its efforts.

Memoranda will be submitted to the district collectors between November 25 and December 10, demanding strict implementation of the Act against sexual harassment at the workplace and seeking details of the formation of the Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) and their functioning in the various institutions in the district.

The Association of Democratic Rights in its study of April 2018 showed that the BJP had the largest number of MPs and MLAs against whom cases were pending with respect to crime against women. About 48 MPs and 120 MLAs from the party had cases registered against them, many of them concerning rape and assault of women.

### **Jan Swasthya Abhiyaan (JSA)**

64 AIDWA delegates from 10 states participated in the National Health Assembly in Raipur. AIDWA interventions in the discussions in the Assembly were well appreciated by the organisers.

The Fourth Global People's Health Assembly (PHA 4) is being held in Dhaka (Bangladesh) from November 15 to 19 this year. Around 200 delegates from JSA will be taking part in this Assembly. In acknowledgement of AIDWA's active participation, six delegates from the organisation have been invited to participate in the event. Tapasi Praharaj (Centre), Rekha Goswami (West Bengal), K S Lakshmi (Karnataka), Santosh Kapoor (HP), Savita (Haryana) and Dakshayani (Andhra Pradesh) will participate on behalf of AIDWA.

### **Recent Supreme Court Judgements**

AIDWA welcomed the historic and path breaking Supreme Court judgment decriminalising consensual sex between adults in the LGBTQ community and amongst others. This judgment in effect legally recognized homosexuality and whittled down a 158-year-old colonial law which led to immense suffering and discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

AIDWA welcomed the Supreme Court judgement holding Section 497 of the IPC (Adultery) unconstitutional and striking it down. Section 497 IPC criminalised a specific form of adultery and was an archaic law which was enacted by the British.

A very lively and interesting discussion was held on these judgements regarding Sections IPC 377 and 497 after Malini Bhattarcharya explained the different aspects of these judgements.

### **Sushila Gopalan Memorial Lecture**

The first annual Sushila Gopalan Memorial lecture will be held this year on December 19 in Delhi. Dr Indu Agnihotri will deliver this lecture which will be held in the Constitution Club. This lecture will be held jointly with the Indian School of Women's Studies and Development

(ISWSD). State committees will also organise programmes on December 19 in memory of SushilaGopalan.

### **Assembly Elections**

State Assembly elections are being held in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram in November-December 2018. The concerned state committees will prepare a charter of demands and leaflets calling upon women to defeat the anti-women, regressive and communal RSS-BJP in their states.

### **Solidarity with Peasants and Workers**

The AIDWA CEC supported the KisanMukti March that is being organised by the All India KisanSangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) on November 29-30, 2018 in Delhi. AIDWA also supported the joint All India Strike Call by the Trade Unions on January 8-9, 2019.

### **Schedule of AIDWA Conferences**

Keeping in mind the forthcoming Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the CEC decided to complete all unit, local, area, zonal, tehsil conferences by December 2018. All district conferences will be completed by February 2019 and state conferences will be completed by September 15, 2019. Only Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura will complete their state conferences by early November.

The CEC had requested the Kerala state committee to host the 12<sup>th</sup> All India Conference. But due to the devastating floods and loss of lives, property and infrastructure, the CEC decided to hold the 12<sup>th</sup> All India Conference in Mumbai, Maharashtra in December 2019.

### **Review of the September 4 All India Women's Protest Rally**

The CEC congratulated all the state committees for the hard work put in by AIDWA leaders and activists in all the states which resulted in the tremendous success of the All India Protest Rally in Delhi on September 4. This success was possible due to collective team spirit.

It was commendable that women from Kerala despite the terrible floods, and from West Bengal and Tripura, despite the massive repression, participated in the Rally. The state-wise mobilisation for the September 4 rally was as follows (Number of districts in brackets): Bihar – 2,280 (18), Maharashtra – 1200 (13), Delhi- 700 (10), Madhya Pradesh – 700 (7), Haryana – 402 (11), Telangana – 360 (18), Uttar Pradesh – 355 (9), West Bengal – 286 (21), Odisha – 200 (6), Rajasthan – 175 (4), Gujarat – 155 (8), Tamilnadu – 105 (28), Punjab – 123 (7), Andhra Pradesh – 100 (5), Jharkhand – 100 (7), Chhattisgarh – 70 (3), Assam – 60 (7), Tripura – 48 (8), Himachal Pradesh – 44 (10), Kerala – 41 (10), Karnataka – 30 (2), Uttarakhand – 10 (4), Manipur – 10 (3),

Total – 7554 (219). Besides this, states reported that many women from the class organisations who had come to Delhi for the September 5 rally also participated in the September 4 rally.

### **Membership**

The statewise membership figures were placed by P K Srimathi. The total All India membership for 2018 deposited at the centreso far is 71,31,459. The CEC congratulated Kerala for completing its target in membership enrolment. It was decided that all states should pay attention to this task urgently and submit their membership by December end.

This AIDWA central executive committee (CEC) meeting was held in Hyderabad, Telangana. The AIDWA Telangana state committee had made excellent arrangements for this meeting. President Malini Bhattacharya, along with vice-presidents SudhaSundarraman and M C Josephine chaired the different sessions of the meeting.

The 22 page report on current developments for the period from July 1 to October 15, 2018 was placed by the general secretary Mariam Dhawale and was adopted after important suggestions by 18 CEC members who took part in the two hour discussion on this report. A resolution 'Condemning the Brutal Violence against Women in West Bengal' was adopted by the CEC. The resolution was placed by Ishita Mukherjee and seconded by Neena Sharma.