

Students Revolt in Bihar Against Inaction on MNS-Shiv Sena Goons

Bihar Bandh called by All India Students' Association (AISA) is a Success

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The scale and level of students' anger and outburst against attack on North Indians in Mumbai and Maharashtra was historic on the day of Bihar Bandh called by All India Students' Association. The whole State machinery was out to stop the agitating students from expressing their anger and shock at the state of inaction by Maharashtra and Central UPA governments, but the students and youth, despite severe police crackdown on bandh and protests on 25th October overcame all suppression and made the bandh a success. The news agencies and media houses under instruction from Bihar Government tried to play down the news, however the scale of the actions on the streets were just too intense to be suppressed.

The non Maharashtrian students who had gone to Mumbai for appearing in an examination conducted by the Railways were brutally and severely attacked on Sunday 19 October by the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) goons and were forced to return from Mumbai. The students from Bihar upon their arrival at Patna Junction Station next day and learning the tragic death of Pawan (examinee from Nalanda) virtually seized the Patna Railway Station and even firing in air by the police did not stop them. The Station was literally in the hands of the agitating students. The students wanted Bihar's chief minister (CM) Nitish Kumar and Railway Minister Lalu Prasad both to come to the Patna Station and meet them. The students' heightened anger was not just due to attacks only on them, but the fact that prior to the examination they had requested Mr. Lalu Prasad to change the centre and venue of the examinations from Mumbai citing the recent attacks on people and students from Bihar and other north Indian states. This request of theirs had fallen on deaf ears of CM and Railway Minister and students' apprehension turned into reality. When the students had gone to Mr. Lalu Prasad prior to the examination for change in venue, he did not meet them and the reports of the same were carried in the news papers prior to the incident of attacks. The students gradually spilled over on the streets and vented their anger by smashing glass-panes of vehicles and breaking anything coming their way. The students in other districts of Bihar took similar action.

To orient the struggle towards the just demand of trying Raj Thackeray for murder and sedition and putting a ban on MNS and Shiv Sena, the AISA called for a meeting of all students' organizations at Patna University on 21st October which was attended by State leadership of the student wings of the ruling Jananta Dal (United) [JD (U)], as well as Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) and National Student's Union of India (NSUI), and also the student wing of Sharad Pawar's National Congress Party (NCP); in fact most student organizations except Akhil Bhartiya Vidhayarhi Parishad (ABVP) which was not invited for the all party meet. At the meeting the joint decisions of all the student organizations was to call for arresting and prosecuting Raj Thackeray on charges of murder and sedition, calling on the forty members of parliament (MPs) from Bihar to initiate immediate action in Parliament to demand that the UPA Government rein in the MNS and Shiv Sena or else

resign. It was decided to hold a protest march on the following day (22nd October) to voice their urgent demands, followed by Students' Assembly

On 22nd morning, however, due to news of police firing on agitating students at Sasaram the AISA leadership of Bihar felt that Students' Assembly was not enough in voicing the urge for urgent action for justice and decided to call for a Bihar bandh and it was accordingly communicated to all the students' organizations that attended the meeting. AISA also asked the organizations to declare the bandh call from the podium during the protest meeting and on the following day all the newspapers carried it. Later while a press conference of the student organizations was on, an all-party meet called by Bihar CM Mr. Nitish Kumar was also going on that was boycotted by the CPI (ML). The meeting was not called so much as to discuss the growing attacks on the north Indians and people from Bihar, rather the agenda of the meeting was the situation in Bihar after the attacks - clearly indicating the Government's mood to suppress the students and youth protests. While parties like JD (U), RJD, LJP and Congress were just paying lip service to the whole situation and then we saw a coming together of all arch rivals while meeting the Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh only to tell him that they have kept the angry youth under control and unless the UPA acts against MNS and Maharashtra Govt. the student-youth anger may become difficult to control.

Along with AISA, however, the students' organizations of all these ruling parties (except ABVP) had declared the support for Bihar bandh on 25th October. The same evening as the all-Party meet ended and they came to know of their students' wing's declaration, the parties pressurized their students' organization to pull out from the bandh. The Chhatra-RJD, was the first to pressure its members to stay away. Many of these ruling parties' students' organizations published their declaration of pulling out from the bandh and by 24th morning it was clear that no students' organization was with bandh except AISA and Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA) which also declared full support for the bandh. At this development the Patna University unit of almost all the organizations (except ABVP) terming this pull-out a betrayal of the student community, declared their intention to defy their State leadership and go with AISA to support the bandh, and eventually they did rebel (including the ruling Party's Chattra-JD (U)) and implemented the bandh call in Patna on 25th October. The bourgeois parties could not suppress their students urge for justice as promised to the PM. There are also confirmed reports of students from organizations of ruling parties defying their Party's order and coming out in full support of the Bandh. At some places even some sections of ABVP ranks defied their organisation's order and supported the bandh. This trend is reflective of the spirit of unity among common students against criminal and corrupt politics of all mainstream parties.

The bandh was hugely successful in Patna and several districts of Bihar including Ara, Buxar, Arwal, Jehanabad, Gaya, Nalanda, Bhojpur, Siwan, Jamui, Lakhisarai, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Sasaram, Sheikhpura, Narkatiagunj, Samastipur etc. The AISA and rebel students from other organizations stopped trains and road traffic at several places in Bihar. The effigies of MNS president Raj Thackeray and Shiv Sena's Bal Thackeray were burnt at various places despite security forces trying to stop them. At some places even the effigy of railway minister Mr. Lalu Prasad was also burnt. The students everywhere demanded that both these leaders be booked for murder and sedition. "If Union Ministers from Bihar fail to ensure the institution of cases against both the Thackerays under IPC sections relating to offences of murder and sedition, we would move ahead to intensify the agitation for their en masse resignation," warned Abhyuday, State Secretary of AISA. Abhyuday also took exception to the silence of Railway Minister Lalu Prasad and Union Steel and Fertilisers Minister Ramvilas Paswan on the issue of taking constitutional action against the Vilasrao Deshmukh government for its failure in ensuring safety and security of Biharis in Maharashtra.

Two thousand students throughout the State were arrested. Police lathicharged the agitating

students in several districts and the irony above all is that those now in jails were threatened by the police to be charged with sedition. There are hundreds of students and youth still in jails. The outburst of the student has been massive and entire police and administrative setup simply could not contain the protesting students except lathicharging and threatening to book them with sedition. Also, what was seen is the students' unity as against the unity of all the ruling parties in suppressing the anger and urge for immediate action for justice to the families of Pawan and the other student who eventually lost their life at the hands of MNS goons, mute spectator Maharashtra government and an insensitive Lalu Prasad who did not heed to students' requests for changing the venue of examinations.

Meanwhile, another incident of another cold blooded murder has taken place in Mumbai in which one youth Rahul Raj from Patna was shot dead in a so-called 'encounter' by the Maharashtra Police led by the assistant commissioner of police (ACP) of Mumbai. His dead body is being brought to Bihar on 29th October. After the bandh, CPI (ML) General Secretary Com. Dipankar Bhattacharya and AISA State leaders visited Pawan's family in Nalanda to share their grief and assure the family of justice for Pawan. It came out that Pawan's father was an employee and a trade union activist in Maharashtra's textile mills before being thrown out of the job in 90's. A son is killed in the State where his father toiled in mills to bring prosperity to that state. Couple of days before the Bihar bandh a day long Nalanda bandh was also called by AISA and RYA to protest Pawan's death. Nalanda happens to be home constituency of Bihar CM Mr. Nitish Kumar. He was also slated to hold some kind of meeting in Nalanda, however, the enraged students uprooted all the arrangements being made for his meeting and the bandh was a huge success in Nalanda.

P.S.

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