Brief Report

Asian Workshop on Street Vending, All India Street Vendors' Convention on Cities for All, Street Food Festival and Annual General Meeting of NASVI Conclude Successfully in Delhi.

Government to bring in Bill for Central Law soon

New Delhi, 21 November:

The three day events of Asian Workshop on Street Vending, All India Street Vendors' Convention on Cities for All, Street Food Festival and Annual General Meeting of NASVI concluded successfully on 20 November, 2011. The events evoked good responses and in particular thousands thronged to the venue of Street Food Festival to join and relish the delicacies, charm and vibrance of street foods from across India. The Union Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Kumari Selja inaugurated the national convention and announced amidst thunderous applause that the Government of India would bring in central law to protect the livelihood and social security rights of street vendors. The Minister of State of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries Harish Rawat graced the occasion of Street Food Festival as the chief guest. The Minister of Urban Development and Housing, Bihar Prem Kumar also joined the convention as an esteemed guest.

Asian Workshop on Street Vending

The event took place on 18 November with street vendor organizations' representatives of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, South Korea and Philippines meeting at Tivoli Garden in Delhi to take stock of the situation of street vendors in different countries of Asia, the responses of national governments towards livelihood right of street vendors and chalk out country specific plan of action. The participants of the workshop also discussed on the nature of municipal governance of various Asian countries, shared their experiences on organizing and agitations, and formed an Asia level Alliance of Street Vendor Organizations to advance the street vendor movement in the continent. The representative of StreetNet International, the Durban based international collective of vendor organizations of Africa, Latin America and Asia, also joined the workshop. The workshop was organized with support from StreetNet International.

National Convention of Street Vendors on Cities for All

The event took place on 19 November at the main lawns of VP House in Delhi. It was attended by more than 1000 street vendor representatives of different states of India. The Union Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation Kumari Selja inaugurated the huge convention and announced that the central government would bring in Bill in the coming

session of parliament for central law to protect the fundamental right to livelihood of millions of street vendors of the country.

The Minister said that the government was committed to accord a new deal towards achieving the secured and dignified livelihood and social security rights of the street vendors who form a critical mass of population, but got disenfranchised in the processes of rapid urbanization and unequal urban distribution system.

The Minister said, "The Ministry of Housing & urban Poverty Alleviation had come up with a new National Policy on Urban Street Vendors in 2009 after a review of the previous policy. The Policy underscores the need for a legislative framework to enable street vendors to pursue an honest living without harassment from any quarter. We had drafted a Model Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, 2009 and circulated to all States/UTs, requesting them to take a cue while legislating on the subject."

She lamented that" the progress on state legislation had not been encouraging."

The Minister added, "We have received continuous representations from the individual street vendors and their organizations like NASVI to bring a central legislation which would be uniformly and mandatorily applicable to all the states and UTs. We are working to evolve and effective and practical central legislation for protection of livelihood rights and social security of street vendors in consultation with all concerned stakeholders including State Government."

Hailing the announcement of the Minister in the national convention, NASVI Coordinator Arbind Singh said, "This is the first major milestone which we have crossed. A couple of days back, the Attorney General of India had also opined in favour of the central law and now the Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation has also unveiled the agenda. We have long been campaigning for such a law. In August this year, we had also gheraoed the Parliament demanding central law and had met the MHUPA Minister Kumari Selja who had gracefully appreciated the need and significance of our demand."

Mr. Singh added, "Now that they have agreed, it is urgent and important for us to speed up the campaign to get the right Bill prepared, introduced and enacted by Parliament."

He added, "Planners of national economy also need to be more pro- urban poor. The Approach Paper to XII Five Year Plan lacks on several counts and fails to centre stage vulnerable urban groups like street vendors in planning designs and processes. Much trumpeted inclusive growth strategies are bound to fail if the organizations of the poor are not given due role in planning processes."

Ms. Selja also felicitated the two street vendors in the convention who have shown exemplary courage to fight out the odds and adversities towards securing their livelihood, and have taken painstaking initiatives to build and expand the street vendor organization. Before felicitation, video clippings on lives and struggles of the nominees were shown to the audience in a very emotionally charged atmosphere. After the video presentation, jury members came over to the dais and handed over the envelope of the

awardees. The Hon'ble Minister opened the envelopes and announced the name of awardees in both categories. The first category award was given to Rekha Devi of Patna. Kaushal Kishore of Jharkhand fetched the second category award. All nominees were felicitated with certificates of honour.

The urban development minister of Bihar Prem Kumar, Begusarai (Bihar) Mayor Alok Kumar Agrawal, Additional and Deputy CEOs of Chhattisgarh Urban Development Agency and representatives from international development agencies, such as Wilma Rose of FNV, Netherlands, and civil society organizations also attended the convention as guests.

The street vendor leaders from several Asian countries including Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Nepal also addressed the convention.

The convention was addressed among others by NASVI President Manali Shah (Gujarat), NASVI Vice President Chandra Prakash Singh (Bihar) and Irshad Ahmed (UP) and NASVI Secretaries V. Mangeswaran (Tamil Nadu) and Ghanshyam Kotwani (Rajasthan) and several street vendor leaders representing different states of India.

Street Food Festival

The two day long Street Food Festival began at the same venue in Delhi on 19 November evening. Selected 27 street food stalls of different states from Kerala to Assam and from Punjab to West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa were there in the festival. The Minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries Harish Rawat was the chief guest on the occasion. The festival was aimed at promoting the street foods from the streets across India with hygiene and affordable prices in the tough time of growing food insecurity and inflation.

The event turned highly successful as thousands from cross sections of society thronged to the venue on both days to relish the delicacies, charm and vibrance of the street foods. The Delhi AajTak and Red FM 93.5 were the partners of the event.

The best three street food vendors would also be awarded soon. The selection of winners would be made by an independent panel of food critics who had attended the festival.

AGM of NASVI

On the last day of the events, Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of NASVI took place on 20 November. It was attended by more than 400 selected delegates of street vendor organizations across 23 states of India. **The AGM began with agenda finalization and condolence in memory of Ashish Raj, a 22 year old NASVI staff who died last year in an accident while he was returning after implementing the Hari Bhari Project.**

The AGM discussed on the Annual Report presented by NASVI Coordinator and adopted it. The Membership and Financial Reports were also passed.

The AGM resolved to step up campaigns and advocacy efforts towards early enactment of central law for street vendors.

The other future plans finalized by the AGM include:

- Struggle for Implementation of Laws Enacted in States
- Capacity Building of Member Organizations
- Campaign and Advocacy for Plan Fund Allocation and Loan Schemes for Vendors
- Technical Support to Member Organizations and Municipal Corporations
- State and City level Workshops
- Vendors' Day Celebration on 20 January
- Human Rights Day Celebration on 10 December
- Women's Day Celebration on 8 March
- Strengthening of Women Cell and Women Street Vendor Organizations
- Trainings to New Member Organizations
- Expanding StreetNet Asia Focal Point Role
- Legal Aid and Lawyers' Network Strengthening
- Legal Handbook Publication
- Publication of Footpath ki Awaaj
- FAQs development
- Production of Videos
- Leadership Camps in States
- Registering National Thrift and Credit Cooperative
- Initiating Programs for Financial Innovation
- Initiating and Streamlining Labour Net Scheme