

# India: Workers in Kerala denounce communalism and the danger of war

A WSWWS reporting team  
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WSWS reporters recently visited the Kannan Devan Hills and Harrison Malayalam tea estates in the Munnar area of Induki district, in the southern Indian state of Kerala. Plantation workers in Munnar were last month involved in a 17-day statewide strike for improved wages and bonuses. The strike was betrayed by the plantation unions.

Members of the reporting team distributed WSWWS leaflets on the strike and held discussions with workers and residents about their social and working conditions, and the issues raised by the statewide walkout. (See: “Kerala plantation workers denounce unions’ wage sellout”) They also discussed broader political questions—the Indian government’s big business program and communalist policies, and the escalating danger of war as a result of Indo-Pakistani tensions and US aggression in the Middle East and against Russia and China.

Since coming to power last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu-supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has aligned itself with the US militarist “pivot to Asia” against China, boosting India’s strategic ties with Washington and Japan in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. Modi has also taken a more hawkish stance against Pakistan, further escalating longstanding geo-political rivalry.

At the same time, the Modi government is seeking to transform India into a cheap labour haven for global corporate investors. This involves various “free-market” economic reforms, including privatisation, further opening of the financial sector to foreign capital, and major cuts to basic subsidies to small farmers and the poor.

Facing widespread popular opposition to this big-business program, the Modi government is attempting to divide the working class. It is whipping up Hindu

communalism against religious minorities, particularly Muslims. Modi and other top BJP leaders have supported the anti-beef-eating and anti-cow-slaughter campaigns of several BJP-led state governments and various Hindu extremist groups.

**George**, 45, from the Harrison Malayalam tea estate, said: “I’m totally opposed to the Modi government. The government’s communal attacks on those who eat beef are not relevant to our tradition. I’m against any government telling people what you should eat.

“Beef eating is nothing new in our country—it’s been practiced by people for a long time—and yet suddenly the government thinks it can tell people what they can eat. The prime minister and various ministers are all making Hindutva [communalist] remarks. There was a murder in Uttar Pradesh and in West Bengal. A truck carrying buffalos was stopped and attacked.

“Before Modi came to power there was some illusion that he might do some positive things, but it has become clear that Modi and his government want to promote their own communal ideology.”

Commenting on the danger of war, George said. “The tensions between the nuclear-armed states of India and Pakistan are dangerous and if war broke out it would be a catastrophe for the people in the region.”

**Rajaiah**, 66, a retired plantation worker, said: “Modi is not what people initially thought of him. His government is inciting Hindu communal attacks and things are getting worse. I welcome the fight for workers’ and peasants’ governments that your organisation advocates. I’m against war, which would be very destructive.”

**Stencila**, a plantation worker, also voiced her opposition to Hindu communalist attacks on beef eaters, adding: “We don’t like the Modi government because he has declared that we have to work on

holidays, such as Christmas Day and Gandhi Jayanthi Day. Those holidays add up to nearly 10 days a year.”

**Mohan**, a plantation worker, explained that the anti-beef eating campaign was aimed at dividing workers along religious lines. “When four oxen come together, a lion can’t attack them. We, the workers, are like oxen that the Modi government wants to divide and weaken in order to attack us,” he said.

**Satya**, a student, said she would tell other students about the *World Socialist Web Site*’s international and socialist perspective. “I’m for social equality and want to see a peaceful world,” she said. “I also agree that the only reasonable solution is if workers take control of the economy.”

**Shanthi**, 45, voiced her concerns about growing war tensions. “You are the only ones informing us about this war danger,” she said. “No other media or parties talk about this real threat to the people. I’m in agreement that this can only be prevented by uniting with the workers in the advanced countries and by establishing workers’ governments all over the world.”



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