

HINDU. 12.02.11- HYDRAB

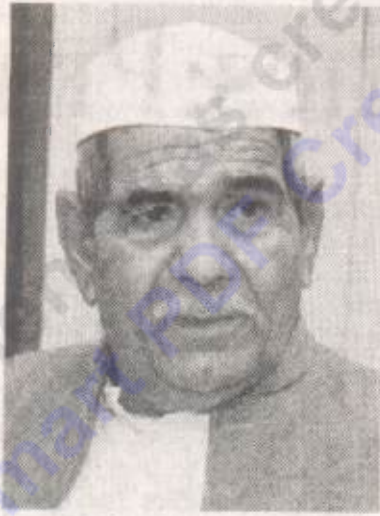
# Farmers plan indefinite siege of Delhi

Gargi Parsai

**NEW DELHI:** Thousands of farmers intend to lay an indefinite siege to Delhi next month to draw government attention to issues such as high input costs and acquisition of farm land for industrialisation. They will be led by Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Mahendra Singh Tikait.

"Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has not found time to meet us even once in the last three years though we have sought time from him at least seven times," said BKU leaders from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and other parts of the country announcing the March 9 siege here on Friday.

Addressing a joint press conference here, the leaders said not once had the government consulted "real farmers" about the problems afflicting the farm sector. "Even for the budget consul-



*Mahendra Singh Tikait*

tations, the government just spoke to agri-businesses or representatives of industry and political parties," they complained.

They want a separate budget for agriculture on the lines of the Rail budget and also a nodal 'single window' Ministry that addresses all farming needs including

credit, land, water, fertilizer, seeds, foodgrains, horticulture, dairying, technology and farm equipment.

Pressing for implementation of the M.S. Swaminathan report on setting the minimum support price (MSP), farmer leaders Ajmer Singh Lakhawal, Rakesh Tikait, Gurnam Singh, Yudhvir Singh said MSP for farm commodities should be 50 per cent higher than "well-calculated" input costs to enable farm families to eke out a decent living.

They want the 1894 Land Acquisition Act to be replaced with a new Act that protects fertile farm land from acquisition for industrial use and clearly defines land use for "public purpose."

## Farmers burdened

The leaders said that the interest on farm credit should be four per cent as recommended by the Swaminathan

Commission. Instead, at some places, banks were compounding interests every six months heaping hardship on farmers who are already not receiving remunerative price for their produce.

BKU representatives demanded cancellation of all Free Trade Agreements, which they said hurt farmers' interests.

Not only BKU units from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Bihar, but farmers organisations from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh too will participate in the "gherao" of the capital on March 9.

## Rail traffic to be spared

Roads coming to Delhi shall be blocked at Saharanpur, Ghaziabad, Palwal, Gurgaon, Bahadurgarh and Sonipat. There will, however, be no disruption of rail traffic.