



BASAI News Updates

August 23, 2022



SKM BOYCOTTS MSP MEETING

- Samyukt Kisan Morcha skips a meeting of the MSP committee
 - The SKM has already rejected the committee and decided not to nominate its representatives
 - Panel forms four sub-groups on mandated topics, including MSP
 - Thousands of farmers gather at Jantar Mantar to press for a loan waiver and a legislation on MSP
- ← Farmers during a protest at Jantar Mantar. MANAS RANJAN BHUI

SKM distances itself from farmers' protest in Delhi

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, AUGUST 22
The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of various farmer organisations that led a year-long protest at the Delhi borders against farm laws, disassociated itself from the protest held at the Jantar Mantar by various farmers' organisations today. The SKM made it clear that it did not give any call for the protest in Delhi. It clarified that a few farm unions that were part of the SKM during the farmers' protest in 2020-21 had organised this protest. Jagjeet Singh Dallewal of the BKU Ekta Sidhupur was leading the protest while other farm unions and leaders were not part of it, said the SKM. Yogendra Yadav, member of the SKM, Haryana, also tweeted and clarified that it was not SKM's protest. "Just to clarify: The kisan mahapanchayat being organised in Delhi today has nothing to do with Samyukta Kisan Morcha," Yadav tweeted.



Farmers at Singhu border before leaving for Delhi. TRIBUNE PHOTO

“Just to clarify: The kisan mahapanchayat being organised in Delhi today has nothing to do with Samyukta Kisan Morcha. Yogendra Yadav, HARYANA SKM MEMBER

It is learnt Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU Arya) state president Sewa Singh Arya had issued a press note in the name of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political), declaring that a kisan mahapanchayat would be organised at the Jantar Mantar to press for various demands. Their demands included justice for farmer families who lost their loved ones in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, release of farmers lodged in jails for the past nine months, arrest of Union Minister Ajay Mishra, law to ensure MSP guarantee and withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill etc. Meanwhile, a large number of farmers assembled near the KMP at the Singhu border today. They demanded the government to fulfil their demands. Before leaving for

Delhi to join the kisan mahapanchayat, they raised slogans against the government. The police beefed up security at the border to maintain law and order besides ensuring smooth flow of traffic on the national highway. The Delhi Police got videography done of all vehicles crossing the border. The registration numbers of all vehicles were also noted, resulting in long queues of vehicles on the national highway. Farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohad said they would continue their fight till the fulfilment of their demands.

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Shed rigid attitudes on farm negotiations

After about a year, familiar scenes were back in the Capital on Monday — large police deployment, barricades obstructing traffic, and farmers trying to push their way into the city. Groups of cultivators called for a mahapanchayat in Jantar Mantar to decide on a raft of demands — including legislating a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Prices (MSP), the sacking of junior home minister Ajay Mishra "Teni" in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case (his son Ashish Mishra, the prime accused in the case, had his bail cancelled by the apex court earlier this year), and the scrapping of all cases against farmers lodged during the 14-month-long struggle.

The mobilisation, though much smaller in scale than the demonstrations last year, is the result of a months-long stalemate over several issues, principal among them the composition of a panel to decide on MSPs. The panel was notified by the Centre 10 months after the agitation was withdrawn but has seen little progress due to the intransigent attitude of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which rejected the panel and said it was packed with members backing the now-withdrawn farm laws. Even the remit of the panel is in question — the SKM says it is to explore ways to provide a legal backing to MSPs while the government told Parliament that it is aimed at making MSPs effective, promoting natural farming, and adapting crop patterns.

When the agitation ended last year, there was an opportunity for the government and unions to sort out all extraneous issues. Instead, disagreements were allowed to fester and the can kicked down the road. Now that the three contentious laws have long been repealed, farm groups need to shed their uncompromising attitude and come together to urgently discuss, deliberate, and negotiate with the government with an open mind. That's the only way forward to resolve differences and avoid disruptions.

MSP not implemented due to Adani, says Malik

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GURUGRAM, AUGUST 22
Lashing out at the Modi government over legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for various crops, Meghalaya Governor Satya Pal Malik said it did not suit the business interests of Gautam Adani.

Promises to fight for farmers' rights

another fight and it will be a fierce one this time. You cannot defeat the farmer of this country. You cannot scare him since you cannot send EID or income tax officers after him. Adani has been given airports, ports, major schemes and, in a way, the preparation is to sell the country, but we will not let that happen," Malik said. After completing his current tenure, he would "fully participate" in the fight for farmers' rights, he said.

Malik, who was in Nuh for an event at a cow shelter in Kira village, said the PM's friendship with Adani made him the richest, while the farmers were still waiting for the MSP guarantee. "If legal guarantee on MSP is not given, there will be

Farmers protest at Jantar Mantar



Farmers stage a protest over various demands from the Centre, including a legal guarantee for a minimum support price (MSP), at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Monday. Related story on page 6 ANI

Hemanti Bhandari

NEW DELHI: Eight months after they ended their year-long protest at Delhi's borders, scores of farmers descended on the national capital on Monday and held a kisan mahapanchayat at Jantar Mantar, in a symbolic protest to signal to the Union government that they haven't forgotten the promises the government made to them.

The farmers once again sought a guarantee of the Minimum Support Price (MSP), compensation to families of farmers killed in Lakhimpur Kheri during protests, and the release of farmers who were arrested during the year-long agitation. In all, six demands were mentioned in the memorandum handed over to authorities on Monday and the others included a write-off of farmer debts, consulting farmers on Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2022, and a termination of a free trade agreement.

The mahapanchayat was attended by farmers from across the country, who reached the Capital on Sunday and Monday on trains and buses and stayed at gurdwaras — primarily Bangla Sahib, Rakab Gani and Sis Gani.

Around 8am Monday, thousands of them assembled at Jantar Mantar and, as the day progressed, more continued to join them.

Among those who turned up was Havendra Tau, 55, a member of the Bharatiya Kisan Union who had lived at the Ghaziipur border protest site during the year-long protest. "We are here to put forth our demands to the government. While this is a symbolic protest, we want to tell the government that if they don't take note of this, a bigger demonstration will be planned. This is a show of strength so that the government doesn't feel that we have weakened," he said.

He said August 22 was chosen for the protest because the farmers' agitation in Punjab against the erstwhile farm laws began the same day in 2020. Farmers said preparations for the protest began a few days ago. Amandeep Kaur, 22, a volunteer from Punjab's



The mahapanchayat at Jantar Mantar was attended by farmers from across the country

Bhatinda, came with a group of elderly persons. She said, "The government had promised MSP but nothing has been done. They said a council will be established but that also has not happened."

Several farmers from the south and east of the country also took part in the protest.

Bino Thomas, 50, the Kerala state committee chairman of Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh, said MSP is not only a requirement for Punjab and Haryana but for all agrarians across the country. "We were present during the year-long protest and we stand with our brothers now," he said.

The protest was called by a farmer's body identified as Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political) under the leadership of Bharatiya Kisan Union Eka Sidhupur chief Jagjit Singh Dallewal. Around 3:30pm, he handed a memorandum to the district magistrate (New Delhi) in the presence of the district deputy commissioner of police, after which the crowd began to leave. An agriculture ministry official said he had no comment on the kisan mahapanchayat.

Serpentine road borders as chaos

Karn Pratap Singh and Peeyush Khandelwal
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NEW DELHI: Several traffic snarls were reported around key Delhi borders, including Ghaziipur, Noida, Tikri and Singhu, especially during the morning peak hours on Monday, as police installed iron barricades and concrete bollards to keep a check on farmers entering the Capital for the kisan mahapanchayat at Jantar Mantar, and scan suspicious vehicles as part of their security arrangements.

The congestion on these stretches began early in the morning as motorists, mostly office-goers, couldn't reach their workplace on time. The situation normalised by late afternoon as the protest came to an end.

Kilometres-long seen on Delhi-Meerut road, NH-9, Noida-Kalandi Kunj, D Singhu border, K Lhaspur, Alipur Badli, Narela, and Ring Road, even Traffic Police set up additional police forces on the roads to handle the situation. Traffic remained normal inside the Capital, including Wazirpur, Outer Circle Connaught Place and Parliament Street.

However, congestion at the UP-Gate border saw the congestion as vehicles extended till Indraprastha, Meerut, Express Traffic Police office

In protest at Jantar Mantar, farmers reiterate demand for support prices

Hemanti Bhandari
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India considers EU-like laws to check Big Tech dominance

Deeksha Bhardwaj

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NEW DELHI: India's upcoming information technology law, which has so far been informally referred to as the Digital India Act, may contain provisions to address monopolies, define obligations for competition compliances and have gatekeeping rules regarding market dominance when it comes to Big Tech, officials familiar with the matter said.

The ministry of electronics and information technology is looking at the corresponding laws of nearly 20 countries, but in particular the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA) recently enacted by the European Union (EU).

The discussions come at a time of growing concern over the influence tech companies, especially the big five of Google, Amazon, Apple, Meta and Microsoft, wield on the internet.

Their dominance is detrimental to smaller companies trying to compete across the open internet, one of the officials aware of the discussions said. "We need a global-level law that will have both civil and criminal liabilities. Data doesn't move in just one way, it's moving across vertically, horizontally, we need to harmonise how to regulate it and protect those who transact digitally," this per-

THE DISCUSSIONS COME AT A TIME OF GROWING CONCERN OVER THE INFLUENCE BIG TECH COMPANIES WIELD ON THE INTERNET

son said, adding the objective was to make the future law simple and accessible for all everyone.

"Increasingly, the entire market is becoming digital," a second official said on the condition of anonymity. "The country needs laws for competition compliance and to counter monopolies and market dominance."

At present, anti-trust issues in India are guided by the Competition Act, 2002 with the Competition Commission of India taking the lead of checking monopolistic practices. The government has proposed amendments to the competition law through the Competition Amendment Bill, 2022, which was referred to a standing committee in the most recent parliament session.

The second official said the new law will have overlaps with the competition law.

Legal experts, welcoming the move, said this will be crucial.

"The EU model was to deal with digital services and digital markets separately. The proposed inclusion of antitrust provisions within the ambit of the proposed digital Act, substantially increases its scope and this expansion should be undertaken understanding the focus and assuring clarity in enforcement of such provisions. Harmonising existing general and special laws and ensuring absence of overlaps between authorities is critical," said SC lawyer and founder of Cybersaathi, NS Nappinai.

The DMA defines a company providing multiple services as a "gatekeeper". "The platform must control one or more core platform services in at least three member states," the EU states.

Failing to comply with the DMA's directives, such as by using private user data for benefit or enforce unfair conditions for business users, can elicit fines up to 10% of annual turnover of a company.

"India is in an enviable position of having both laws and precedents to guide its path. Whilst adapting global practises it would be best advised to ensure that there is no overreach and precedents are not blindly adapted but that simple easy to enforce provisions suitable to the Indian ecosystem are formulated" Nappinai added.

Centre may expand agri infra fund to include startups

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NEW DELHI: The agriculture ministry will soon seek the cabinet's approval to expand the ambit of the ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) so that start-ups and emerging new technologies like hydroponics are eligible for funding under the corpus, an official said. The AIF, which was announced in 2020 and had figured in the ₹20 lakh crore first stimulus package to deal with the Covid-19 crisis, aims to offer medium- to long-term debt financing for investment in farm projects.

This is the second time the ambit of the corpus is being amended. In July last year, the fund had been expanded through a cabinet approval to make agricultural market produce committees (APMCs), state agencies and cooperatives eligible for credit for rural infrastructure projects. The original mandate the AIF was limited to post-harvest and farm gate infrastructure projects.

The AIF provides loans on easy terms totalling ₹1 lakh crore over four years, starting with a sanction of ₹10,000 crore for 2020-21 and ₹30,000 crore each for the next three financial years. Borrowers get an interest subvention, where part of the interest is paid by the government, of 3% per annum up to a loan limit of ₹2 crore for a period of seven years.

"So far, 13,700 projects of investment of around ₹17,500 crore with a sanction of ₹10,131 crore loans under the AIF have been approved," the official said, requesting anonymity. On



Indian farm startups are fast expanding, offering a range of tech-based services. MINT

an average, 30 agriculture infrastructure projects per day are being sanctioned, he added.

The scope of these projects include warehouses, assaying units, primary processing units, custom hiring centres, sorting and grading units, cold store and cold chain projects, biostimulant manufacturing facilities and seed processing units.

The inclusion of start-ups reflects the growing potential of emerging technologies in the farm sector, which provides livelihood to nearly half of all Indians. "This expansion is aimed at allowing high-tech solutions in the agriculture sector, such as hydroponics. It will also startups to tap the vast potential in the sector," the official said.

Indian farm startups are fast expanding, offering a range of tech-based services. It was the third highest country in number of unicorns after the US and China in 2021. A unicorn is a startup with a valuation of at least \$1 billion. India currently has nearly 1000 agri start-ups across the farm value chain.

Climate crisis: China battles heatwave, drought, bushfires

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BEIJING: Army personnel and firefighters have been deployed to put out multiple bushfires raging in southwest China's Chongqing as the municipality and several provinces continue to be scorched by a record heatwave, which has dried up rivers, withered crops and led to rationing of electricity.

Forecasters on Monday issued a temperature "red alert" for the 11th consecutive day on Monday and raised the national drought alert to "orange" - the second-highest level.

The worst heatwave in more than six decades in China besides impacting farming has also hampered industrial production across the southwest with many manufacturing units shutting down work to divert electricity to homes amid a rising demand for power among the populace.

More than 200 meteorological monitoring stations across the country showed that temperatures in many places - including southwest China's Chongqing and bordering Sich-



Parched crops on the bank of the Yangtze river that is facing record low water levels in Chongqing, China.

REUTERS

uan province, the eastern Zhejiang province and the north-western Shaanxi province - have exceeded 40°C since August 1, Chinese state media reported.

The sprawling municipality of Chongqing is among the worst hit. "Over 5,000 rescue personnel, including firefighters, armed forces, and professional rescue teams, as well as seven helicopters have been mobilised to put out the fires. More than 1,500 people have

been evacuated to safe places," official news agency Xinhua reported on Monday.

The province of Sichuan, which relies on hydropower for approximately 80% of its energy supply, has been severely affected especially because of less water flowing through the Yangtze river.

The ongoing heatwave is forecast to wane gradually from August 26, according to the China Meteorological Administration.



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Notice inviting quotations

Empanelment of professional CA/CMA firms for facilitation of HarHith Franchisees for obtaining GST No., FSSAI No. & filing of GST Returns

The Haryana Agro Industries Corporation Ltd., Panchkula invites quotations for empanelment of CA/CMA firms for facilitation of HarHith Franchisees for obtaining GST No. FSSAI No. & filing of GST Returns.

The prescribed proforma may be obtained from the O/o Managing Director, Haryana Agro Industries Corporation Ltd, Bays No. 15-20, Sector-4, Panchkula or from the website haic.co.in, harhith.com and submit the same duly filled in on or before **31.08.2022 up to 5.00 PM**. For details, please visit the HAIC website: haic.co.in & harhith.com

Sr. Accounts Officer

PRDH/1005/11/22/2023/11997/31/4

Pothole accidents

Criminal to be casual about man-made disasters

THE description of road accidents caused by potholes as man-made disasters by a Kerala High Court Bench could not be more apt. According to government data, potholes, on an average, claimed 2,300 lives annually across the country during the five years from 2016 to 2020. The court's directive to the district collectors in Kerala to be proactive, while making them accountable for any such accident in future, is an approach that needs to be replicated. Vital to the road safety project is the successful launch of the planned online system and mobile application by the National Highways Authority of India that will enable road users to report any pothole or damaged portion.

The buck should ideally stop with the contractors and officials, whose slapdash efforts are exposed, especially during monsoons, as the use of inferior quality material along with unscientific road-laying techniques leads to the creation of dangerous craters. Potholes also reveal a criminal neglect of duty, with government agencies playing the waiting game over whose job it is to repair them; neither is there an attempt to put warning signs in the absence of a quick-fix solution. Even tragedy fails to move the authorities, or the resolve shown by individuals who have suffered immeasurable grief, such as vegetable vendor Dadarao Bilhore. The Mumbai resident chose not to cry the day his son died in an accident; instead, he chose to fill up as many potholes as he could on his own so that others are spared the pain he had to endure.

Potholes are usually caused by the presence of heavy traffic and water on roads. Ensuring the use of standardised methodology and good quality material becomes necessary, along with regular maintenance and an effective accountability system. Potholes on highway stretches can be more fatal, considering the faster movement of vehicles. Quality, and not quantity, ought to be central to the massive roadway expansion that is under way.



Biological Agri Solutions Association of India

Varsities can hire field experts as faculty

'PROFS OF PRACTICE' Degree, publication requirement not must | Policy to be notified soon

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22
 In a decision that will open up new opportunities and also prove to be a win-win situation for industry experts as well as universities, higher education institutions (HEIs) may now be able to take on board distinguished experts as faculty members.

Under a policy termed "Professors of Practice" (which is expected to be notified shortly), a new category is being created under which formal academic qualification and publication requirements will not be a mandatory requirement, officials said.

The draft regulations for appointing "Professors of Practice" (cleared by the UGC recently) are also being appreciated by experts. If implemented, they will also benefit students by offering them a right mix of academics and insight from the



HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

People of the industry can contribute much more than pure academics as they have hands-on experience. It is often said that whatever is taught in the university does not come handy for students in the job market as it is more theoretical in nature. Experts

WIN-WIN SITUATION FOR ALL

- Should have expertise in a field with at least 15 years of experience
- Win-win situation for industry experts as well as universities
- Will offer students right mix of academics and insight from ground

The experts said the UGC guidelines of 2009 also stated that an "outstanding professional with established reputation in the relevant field who has made significant contribution to knowledge" can be taken on board. However, the draft guidelines for "Professors of Practice" are

"more specific in nature". Under the policy, the HEIs can hire experts from various fields, including engineering, science, media, literature, entrepreneurship, social sciences and fine arts. Candidates with proven expertise in a specific profession or field with at least 15

years of service or experience, preferably at a senior level, will be eligible. A formal academic qualification is not considered essential for the position if they have exemplary professional practice in lieu, according to the draft guidelines.

Experts will also be exempted from the requirement of publications and other eligibility criteria for recruitment of faculty members at the Professor level. However, they should possess the skills to carry out the duties and responsibilities.

Their number in an HEI should, however, not exceed 10 per cent of the sanctioned posts at any point in time. The hiring will be for a fixed term and will not affect the number of sanctioned posts or the recruitment of regular faculty members, officials said, adding that the position would not be open for those in teaching position either serving or retired.

Man arrested for black marketing PDS wheat

FARIDABAD, AUGUST 22

The police have arrested a man in connection with alleged black marketing of the PDS wheat. As many as 250 bags have been recovered from his possession.

The accused has been identified as Sonu, resident of Bhagat Singh Colony of Bal-labgarh. He was arrested from a godown near Elson Chowk on Sunday evening after a raid by the police and officials of the Food and Supply Department. The godown has been sealed and a case under the Essential Commodities Act has been registered against Sonu. — TNS