

TIKAIT VISITS SINGHU, SAYS AIM IS TO ROPE IN 40 LAKH TRACTORS

Panchayats keep protest fire burning

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BHARTIYA KISAN Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait and Jagtar Singh Bajwa of the Kisan Andolan Committee addressed protesters at Singhu border Wednesday, saying that their aim is to add 40 lakh tractors to the movement across the country.

Over the last week Tikait, who has grown in prominence at the Ghazipur protest site, has spoken across Haryana on mobilising more farmers. He reiterated this at the Singhu border.

"The next target is to bring together 40 lakh tractors. We will go to every village of the country. Our march and panch shall remain at Singhu and neither shall break. Our movement is not limited to Delhi. Wherever farmers protest with their tractors in the country, they become a part of this movement," he said.

A week after internet restrictions were lifted from the border protest sites, farmers at Singhu said they are arriving in batches, often in bigger numbers than before.

Protesters at Singhu are largely from Punjab, while some are from Haryana. They said their village union committee or panchayat enlists members from each family to attend the protest in batches.

Gurpreet Singh (25) from Lakhnour Sahib in Ambala district could be seen with five-six other men from his village Wednesday.

"As no one knows how long this protest will go on, at our villages the committees are making a list and assigning protest duty to each individual from a family. A team of 6-10 people is



Protesters take rest in a tractor trolley at Singhu on Wednesday. Amit Mehra

listed," he said. The men had arrived Sunday.

Hardeep Singh (40) from Jandali village in Fatehgarh Sahib district had left the protests site on January 28 and is now back. "The panchayat at the village takes a decision and enlists people. Every family has to send one person. I am an MBA graduate and have a business at Mohali but I'm here with my brother. This way the movement stays disciplined and is made

stronger," he said.

Several farmers from Haryana said they follow the same process.

Tej Veer (50) from Matour village in Kaithal district said, "The village panchayat draws up the lists. We get a duty of around seven days. This is my first time here. We have got 11-12 tractors; earlier there were just 5-6."

Shatpal Singh (50) from Kharal village in Jind district said, "Around 15-20 men come and go

in batches. We get all the supplies. Now there are more men committed to the protest than before."

A project to take away our land

Tikait, meanwhile, claimed the government has another law in the pipeline. "The government will be introducing the Seed Bill, according to which the government will decide which seeds shall be sown and from which company it shall come. All of this

is a business, so that farming goes away from the hands of the farmers and the large businesses enter it. This is a project to take away our land."

Addressing the crowd, Tikait also alleged that the government was behind the Red Fort incident. "So what if at a public monument someone put their flag? Now the government is thinking how can this be punished by law... Lakhs of farmers came inside Delhi on that day, not a leaf was taken out

of place by them."

He said that those in the media who want to present news in favour of the protests are being arrested or FIRs are being filed against them. "This is harassment and an attack on democracy. *Bandook ka pehra pen aur camera pe hai*," he said.

Tikait reiterated that the movement is apolitical. "This is not a movement to win votes. This is a fight to protect our livelihood."