

Centre to consult stakeholders on farmers' legal MSP demand, next round May 4

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The demand for a legally enforced MSP was the main agenda of the discussion and the government sought time for inter-ministerial consultations

By BL New Delhi Bureau



A meeting between a Central team led by Union ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Pralhad Joshi and Piyush Goyal and 28 farmer leaders remained inconclusive. Another meeting is scheduled on May 4 when the Centre will have some inputs to share with the farmers after consulting with all other stakeholders.

“A positive discussion took place in a cordial atmosphere. The talks will continue. The next meeting will take place on May 4,” Chouhan said after the meeting concluded in Chandigarh.

The government has decided to conduct stakeholder consultations with farmer organisations as well as with State governments, the Agriculture Ministry said in a statement. Other stakeholders including traders, exporters and food processing industry would also be consulted on the demand for legal MSP, it said.

The Centre will also discuss with farmer producer organisations (FPOs) on the likely impact to gather information about various options of enforcing the MSP on the buyers, sources said. The consultation process is likely to be led by Joint Secretary (Marketing) Purna Chandra Kishan.

Briefing the media after the 3-hour long meeting at the venue, farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar said the demand for a legally enforced minimum support price (MSP) was the main agenda of the discussion and the government sought time for inter-ministerial consultations about the possible repercussions of a legal guarantee.

Kohar also said that they told the government not to bow down to the US pressure to lower import duty on certain agriculture produce. Chouhan is said to have assured them that the government would not accept any such pressure from the US and dismissed media reports as rumours, according to Kohar.

Protests on

Meanwhile, news agency PTI quoting farmer leader Guramneet Singh Mangat has said that several farmer leaders including Sarwan Singh Pandher of KMM and Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kohar of SKM (non-political) were detained by Punjab Police in Mohali from Chandigarh on way to the protest sites at Shambhu and Khanauri, bordering Haryana.

Mangat also said that Punjab Police might evict the protesters from the two sites on the Punjab-Haryana border as heavy barricading was raised in Mohali to prevent the farmers from heading towards their respective protest sites. There are also media reports suggesting deployment of heavy police force near the two protest sites. Police personnel from various districts are said to have been called near Shambhu and Khanauri where farmers have been camping since February last year after prevented from proceeding towards New Delhi.

The meeting resumed in February after a year-long protest by farmers led by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) as in 2024 talks between the Centre and farmers had collapsed. Four rounds of meetings took place between central ministers and the protesting farmers in February 2024 but the talks ended after farmer leaders rejected the suggestions of assured government procurement of some pulses, cotton and maize at MSP for five years.

The Union Ministers were accompanied by senior officials including Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi, Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra, Additional Secretary Maninder Kaur Dwivedi, Joint Secretary Kishan and Deputy Agricultural Marketing Adviser SK Singh.

Punjab's agriculture minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian and food and civil supplies minister Lal Chand Kataruchak, Chief Secretary KAP Sinha were also present at the meeting on Wednesday.

Besides a legal guarantee for crop MSP, the farmers are demanding a debt waiver, pension for farmers and farm labourers, no hike in electricity tariffs, withdrawal of police cases, "justice" for the victims of the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence, reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act 2013 and compensation to the families of farmers who died during a previous agitation in 2020-21.

Source: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/centre-to-consult-stakeholders-on-farmers-legal-msp-demand-next-round-may-4/article69349287.ece>