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# Talks only after Centre creates conducive atmosphere: farmers

Unions demand restoration of Internet, de-escalation of tensions for dialogue

ASHOK KUMAR  
NEW DELHI

Farmer leaders on Sunday said the unions would not take the initiative to resume dialogue with the government until the Centre created a conducive atmosphere for talks.

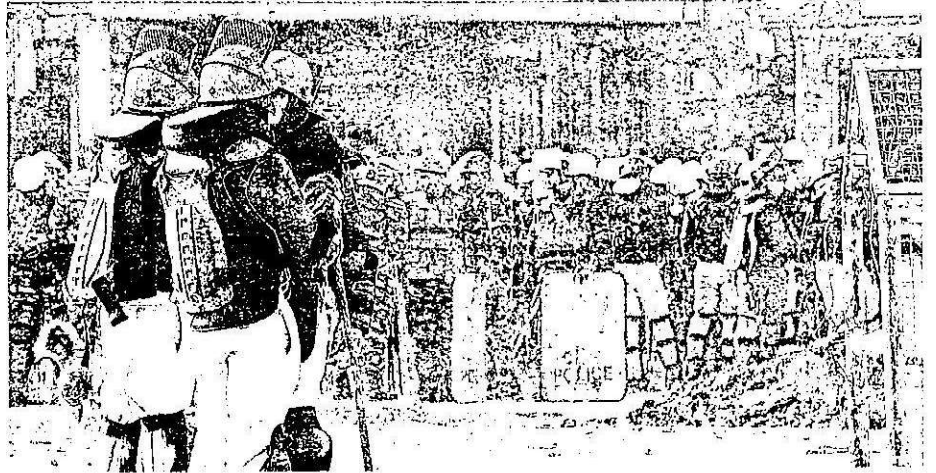
The leaders also demanded that the government restore the Internet services at the protest sites, remove the barricades and de-escalate tensions to create the right atmosphere for talks.

The demands came as the police stepped up security at the three sit-in sites around Delhi, closely guarding entry to the sites even as the number of protesting farmers swelled through the day.

## Amarinder's initiative

In a related development, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh called an all-party meeting on February 2 to evolve consensus on the way forward on the issue of the farm laws and the farmers' agitation in the light of the recent developments in Delhi.

In an official statement,



On guard: Security personnel keeping watch at a farmers' protest site at the Singhu border in Delhi on Sunday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

the Chief Minister said the crisis could be tackled effectively and the farmers' interests be protected only through the collective efforts of all Punjabis and the political parties of the State.

Responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement at an all-party meeting that the proposal to suspend the three laws for 18 months still stood, Buta Singh Burj Gill, head of a Bharatiya Kisan Union faction in Punjab,

said: "Prime Minister had spoken on the three farm laws for the first time saying that suspension of laws was a good proposal and talks must resume. We too are ready for talks, but the government must de-escalate the situation, restore Internet services, lift the barricades and stop attacks at the sit-in sites."

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## Saddened by insult to tricolour: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the country was saddened by the "insult" to the National Flag on Republic Day. He said his government was "committed to modernising agriculture". ▶ PAGE 5

# PM vows to modernise farming

'Efforts of the government will continue in that direction in the future'

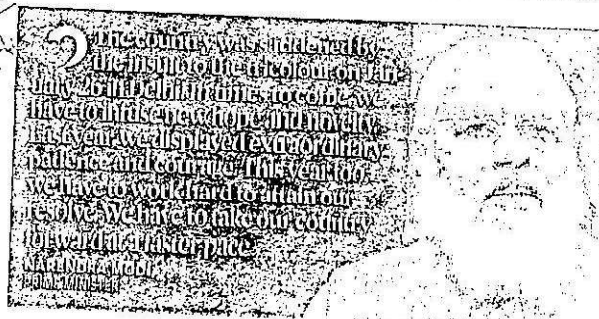
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Breaking his silence over the vandalism at the Red Fort on Republic Day during the farmers' protest, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said, "The country was saddened to see the National Flag being insulted."

In his first radio broadcast, *Mann Ki Baat*, of 2021, Mr. Modi said his government was "committed to modernising agriculture and the efforts of the government will continue in that direction in the future as well."

The Prime Minister talked about the country's fight against COVID-19 and how the Made in India vaccine had not only made the country self-reliant (*Atma Nirbhar*) but had also become a moment of self-pride (*Atma Gaurav*).

Recounting the developments in January, including India's remarkable comeback in the four-match Test series in Australia, Mr. Modi said: "Amid all this, the country was saddened by the insult to the tricolour on



January 26 in Delhi. In times to come, we have to infuse new hope and novelty. Last year, we displayed extraordinary patience and courage. This year too, we have to work hard to attain our resolves. We have to take our country forward at a faster pace."

## Vaccine success

Referring to the vaccination exercise, Mr. Modi said it was the world largest and fastest vaccination drive.

While India had vaccinated over 30 lakh frontline corona warriors in 15 days, he said, the U.S. needed 18 days and the U.K. 36 to reach that figure.

India's decision to send vaccines to several countries had generated worldwide appreciation and displayed its capabilities and self-reliance in the field of medicines.

Noting that the country was approaching its 75th year of Independence, the Prime Minister urged people, especially the young, to write about freedom fighters and incidents associated with their struggle.

Reading out the comments of a resident from Munger in Bihar, the Prime Minister mentioned Tarapur Martyrs Day, when the British had mercilessly killed several of a group of brave

young patriots on February 15, 1932. The incident did not receive the publicity it should have, he said.

Speaking of the recent announcement of Padma award winners, he said the practice of conferring the honour on unsung heroes that was started a few years ago had been maintained.

Mr. Modi said his monthly broadcast was an opportunity to learn many new things and mentioned a vegetable market at Bowenpally in Hyderabad which was generating electricity from vegetable waste; a gram panchayat in Panchkula in Haryana which used waste water for irrigation, the people of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh making Mon Shugu, a form of eco-friendly paper; a young woman entrepreneur growing strawberries in Bundelkhand; women in Jabalpur successfully running a rice mill after taking over the reins; and an all-woman crew of Air India commanding the longest flight from San Francisco to Bengaluru.