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MPs target govt. on farm laws

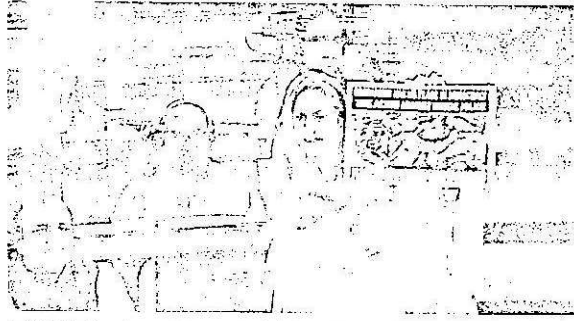
Harsimrat Badal of the Shiromani Akali Dal says it has become inhuman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI:

Opposition members in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday targeted the Modi government over the farm laws, with former Union Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal accusing the government of becoming 'inhuman' not to see the plight of farmers. The House was discussing the Motion of Thanks on the President's address to the joint session of Parliament.

Defending the farm laws, BJP Meenakshi Lekhi said they were brought in to end farmers' suicides in India. The fact that the world is now discussing the protests in India over the farm laws instead of the coronavirus indicates that there is an international conspiracy to defame India, she added.

Ms. Lekhi alleged that the farmers' protest was "a Molotov cocktail of Khalistanis, PFI [Popular Front of India] and ISI [Inter Services Intelligence] agendas at the behest



SAD MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal showing a photograph while speaking in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. •PII

of masters sitting in Beijing."

Ms. Badal of SAD, who quit the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over the farm laws, said that when the laws were first brought in as ordinances by the Modi government, she had urged her Cabinet colleagues to have wider consultation. "We were told that it [consultations] will happen when we bring a law," she recalled.

The SAD leader also claimed that she had submitted a letter to the Agriculture Minister against the farm

laws after she had ascertained the views of the farmers. Ms. Badal said while the farmers were braving the biting cold of Delhi for over 70 days at the borders of Delhi, the government had shut its eyes and ears.

"Yes, I was in the government for the past six years but when the government becomes inhuman, what's the point of staying in such a government," Ms. Badal said. She also questioned the intelligence failure in preventing the January 26 violence and pointed out that it

was known a day before (January 25) that there was call to deviate from the laid down route and move towards the Red Fort.

Another former NDA ally, Hanuman Beniwal of the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, said the BJP would pay a price for its arrogance in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll.

Trinamool's Saugata Roy accused Union Ministers of resorting to "political tourism" in West Bengal and accused the BJP of following a divisive agenda. Referring to Prime Minister Modi getting emotional in the Rajya Sabha while giving a farewell speech for Ghulam Nabi Azad, he urged Mr. Modi to also shed a few tears for the farmers who died in the protests. Countering Mr. Modi's *aandolan jivi* [professional protester] jibe, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen MP Asaduddin Owaisi said, "Yes, there will be *andolans* as Narendra Modi is not the emperor, and those days are gone."