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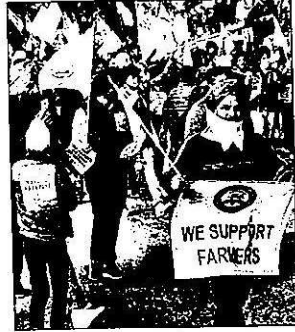
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Who will be responsible for loss of lives at protest venue: Court

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New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday said it did not mind farmers continuing peaceful protests even after it stays implementation of the farm laws but wanted to know from the union leaders who would be responsible for loss of lives at the protest venue and who would give guarantee that it would not turn violent.

"The most serious questions facing us as the constitutional court, being the custodian of right to life, is the possible loss of lives at the protest venue. We do not mind the protests going on but who is going to take responsibility for loss of lives.



APEX COURT IRKED

If they can, then let them go on with it," a bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian said.

Appearing for the farmers' unions, senior advocate Dushyant Dave said, "no-

body can (take responsibility)". The bench said, "God forbid, if anything goes wrong. We do not want anyone's blood on our hands. Responsibility is heavy on all of us. There is no bloodshed till now. But it can happen due to even a stray incident. We know how quickly things can go wrong."

Indicating that it would stay implementation of the laws and set up a committee to hear farmers' grievances against the laws, the bench said, "We will make the atmosphere conducive for negotiations. Who will be responsible for bloodshed, if it happens? We as the highest constitutional court are bound to protect people's lives. Who will take responsibility

for sabre rattling leading to some violence?"

Attorney general K K Venugopal cited the incident of violence by farmers in Haryana where they damaged the venue where the chief minister was to meet farmers. "The protests should be peaceful and in accordance with law. Now, they are going to hold a 2,000-strong tractor rally on Rajpath on Republic Day," he said.

Dave immediately said "we are not going to do that". The bench said it was glad to hear that. But when Venugopal said Dave's statement should be recorded, the counsel backed out and said he would take instruction from the unions and get back to the court.