

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು
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Shah meets MPs, MLAs over farmers' protest

BJP lawmakers told to reach out to community groups

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NEW DELHI

The BJP's national leadership has gone into a huddle with party MPs and legislators from Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and a few districts of Rajasthan over the farmers agitation. The top brass have urged them to proactively reach out to agitating farmers from their areas, particularly the Jat community, to resolve the protests by farmer unions over the three contentious laws related to agriculture.

At a meeting held at the BJP's national headquarters in New Delhi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Agriculture Minister Narendra Tomar, party president J.P. Nadda, and general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh urged legislators and local leaders to get in touch with local *khaps*, panchayats and community groups in these areas to explain the party and government's position.

The party was constrained to hold the meeting not just because the agitation was not coming to an end but also because of ground-level feedback from its own workers who warned that the continuation of the agitation without any outreach or proactive step by the party and the govern-



Seething rage: Farmers gathered at a mahapanchayat recently held in Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh. •PTI

ment would alienate farming communities, especially the Jat community, which has voted for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh since 2014.

"Home Minister Amit Shahji said it was clear that the agitation was being exploited by certain political groups to effect changes other than the farmers' demands. The agitation was about anything but the laws. It seems to be an ideological war with the government," said a senior leader who was present at the meeting.

"We have been asked to remain in our areas for the next 15-20 days at least and get in touch with all *khaps*, panchayats and community leaders to explain our position," he said. Sources confirmed that legislators gave the feedback that more work

needed to be done by the government to mollify agitated farmers, than the rounds of talks held till now.

While the BJP will fight the Punjab election on its own and does not have a lot riding on it, the party's majority in Uttar Pradesh, which go to the polls with Punjab in 2022, will be affected by any alienation of the Jat community. In Haryana, while the BJP does not count on the support of the Jats, it is in alliance with the Jannayak Janata Party, led by Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, which commands the community's support and has been facing a backlash.

A senior Minister told *The Hindu* that the government was ready to talk to farmers groups on specific issues.