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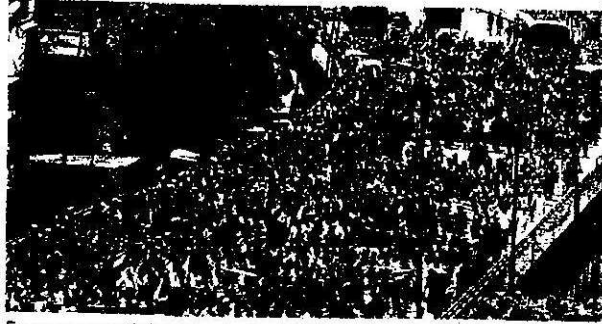
# 'Build strong mass movement against farm laws in Karnataka'

National leaders end 3-day tour with rally in Bengaluru

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

Concluding a three-day tour of Karnataka on Monday, a delegation of national farmers' leaders, including Rakesh Tikait and Dr. Darshan Pal, who are leading the movement in Delhi, had one message for the State's farmers: "Build a strong mass movement against farm laws in the State. The movement has to take root in south India if it has to become truly national."

Addressing a rally in the city on Monday, Mr. Tikait called upon farmers to block Bengaluru's borders with tractors like in Delhi. "It was in this State that Prof. M.D. Nanjundaswamy thought way ahead of his times - protested against GATT agreement and also rightly foresaw the threat of corporates, and



Farmers participating in the Vidhana Soudha Chalo rally in Bengaluru on Monday. • SUDHAKARA JAIN

protested against firms like KFC almost three decades ago. Today, we are living the reality he foresaw. The entire food sector is being corporatised. This is going to be the business of hunger," he said. "The State government here has not only blindly implemented all the farm laws by the Centre, but also brought in more amendments to the Land Reforms Act, which is a conspiracy to snatch away our lands," he added.

Samyukta Horata - Karnataka, a coalition of farmers,

Dalits and labour groups, has been consistently organising protests against the farm laws in the State, though it hasn't taken the shape of a mass movement. The Horata has now announced a Karnataka bandh on March 26. Farmers' leader Badagalpura Nagen-dra said they have planned a Raita Mahapanchayat in north Karnataka in May for which the aim is to organise one lakh people.

Another farmers' leader Yuddhaveer Singh said the BJP-led Union government

first tried to brand the movement as limited to Punjab and later Khalistani supporters, but later Haryana and U.P. joined. "Now, it is the turn of Karnataka," he said. "The Union government may have not responded to the movement, but our support is only growing. Labour unions protesting the new labour codes and privatisation have joined us, the traders have also joined us. Geographically too, the movement is spreading. Karnataka has shown that it is truly a national movement," he said.

State Agriculture Minister B.C. Patil visited the rally site and accepted the memorandum of demands from farmers on behalf of Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa. The farmers demanded repeal of three farm laws by the Union government, apart from roll-back of amendments to the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, Karnataka APMC Act and the recent cow slaughter bill, among a host of other issues.