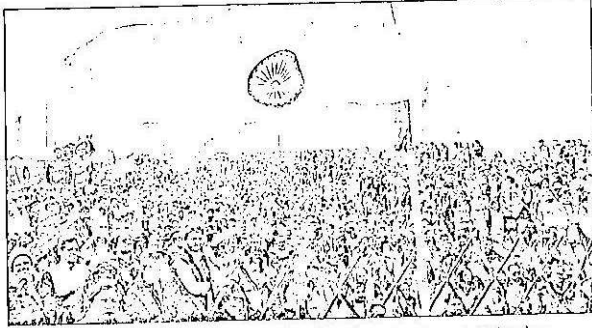# Centre to set up panel to look into farmers' issues, Hazare's demands

Decision Taken To Prevent Anna's Fast

Vishwa.Mohan
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Amid farmers' resolve to continue their agitation and uncertainty over next round of talks with the government, the Centre has decided to set up a high-powered committee to look into several farm issues, including minimum support price (MSP) based on comprehensive cost, flagged by social activist Anna Hazare.

The decision to set up the committee, headed by Tomar, was hurriedly taken in order to prevent Hazare from going on his scheduled fast. Hazare had, in solidarity with the farmers agitating for repeal of farm laws, announced his fast would begin from Saturday. He, however, on late Friday called it off after the Centre rushed minister of state for agriculture Kailash Choudhary and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis to his village Ralegan Siddhi in Maha-

rashtra and assured him of setting up a committee to look into all his pending demands. Sources in the ministry said that the committee would comprise of Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand, MoS agriculture Parshottam Rupala, Agri-trade law and policy expert Vijay Sardana, progressive farmer from Haryana and Padma Shri awardee Kanwal Singh Chauhan and farmer representatives.

Hazare had, earlier, written to the ministry, listing pending demands including autonomy to the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and MSP based on comprehensive cost (C2) as recommended by M S Swami-

nathan committee as reasons for his joining the farmers' protests through the fast.

The committee, headed by agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, will finalise its recommendations within six months even as the Prime Minster Modi during all-party meeting on Saturday referred to the agriculture ministry's proposals of putting implementation of farm laws on hold for 18 months and setting up a joint committee to make progress through discussion on all demands of farmers during the period.

The unions, however, rejected the proposals, saying they would not end the protests till the farm laws are repealed.

Farmers and their supporters at the Ghazipur border on Saturday

Oppn: Withdraw cases against farm leaders

few opposition party leaders demanded that cases registered against the agitating farmer leaders be withdrawn.

The Prime Minister also condemned the desecration of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the US, saying such incidents are not welcome. The meeting also saw opposition parties bring up the ongoing military confrontation with China and said there should be a full-fledged discussion and the Prime Minister should respond to questions.

"As far as issues related to the farmers, which most of you have touched upon, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar had on January 22 told the farm union leaders that since we are not reaching an agreement, please go back and ponder for 4-5 days," Modi said, and added: "Tomar ji had said that he is just

a phone call away and whenever farm leaders feel comfortable, they can give him a call and the time and venue for the meeting will be finalised in a few hours."

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha said, "Farmers have come all the way to the doorstep of Delhi to converse with their elected government and, therefore, there is no question of the farmer organisations closing the door on talks with the government. They continue to seek a full repeal of the three farm laws and a legal entitlement guaranteeing MSP for all farmers."

Urging party leaders to help end the deadlock over the three new farm laws, Modi asked them to talk to the farm union leaders.

"Please tell leaders you may know that the offers made by Tomar ji still stand... you all must be desirous that the matter is resolved through dialogue."