

Farmers hold rally for loan waiver

P-17

Demand fair prices, minimum income guarantee scheme

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, March 17

Thousands of farmers held a 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' at Jantar Mantar here on Thursday protesting against the Centre's "anti-farmer and pro-corporate" policies. They demanded waiver of all farm loans and a minimum income guarantee scheme.

Gathering under the banner of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) and the All India Coordination Committee of Farmers Movements, the farmers warned the Centre of "more farmers suicides," especially in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, where wheat, mustard, chickpea, ajwain, vegetables and other crops were destroyed by unseasonal rains and hailstorm.

Memorandum to PM

In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister, they demand-



Up in arms Farmers demonstrate at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Thursday NAMOH/WWW

ed waiver of all farm loans, fair and remunerative prices for produce, a Central policy on natural calamities and disasters, guaran-

tee of minimum income to farmers, a ban on GM crops, among others.

Expressing disappointment

with two years of the Modi government's rule, the farmer organisations said no "tangible gains for India's farmers or farming."

could be seen and the agrarian crisis was becoming "more acute."

Naresh Tikliat, national president of BKU and son of the formidable farmer leader, late Mahendra Singh Tikait, lamented that "despite contributing quite significantly to the formation of your (Modi) government at the Centre, farmers are being marginalised."

Citing the Budget 2016-17 proposals, which have been termed 'pro-farmer' by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, the memorandum said it was another example of the government's "apathy" toward farmers as it "completely ignored" an outlay for loan waiver that was "urgently required" in view of large-scale indebtedness and rising suicides by farmers, even as over ₹5 lakh crore has been written off for the rich and the corporates.

On the new crop insurance scheme announced recently, the memorandum said mere reduction of premium rates would not work; and demanded proper loss assessment of crops and mandatory insurance along with bank credit, among others.

Handwritten note: *Handwritten 18/3/16 for the News paper Unit*