

माननीय श्री संत बलबीर सिंह जी, 'Demand to provide assistance in increasing the income of farmers of Punjab'. आप पंजाबी में बोलें।

Demand to provide assistance in increasing the income of farmers of Punjab

SHRI SANT BALBIR SINGH: * Sir, I rise today to bring to the attention of this House a matter of urgent public importance concerning the farmers of Punjab and their deteriorating economic condition. In 2012, the Government had made a promise to double the income of farmers across the country. However, even after more than a decade, this promise remains unfulfilled. A committee constituted by the hon. Supreme Court recently concluded that the daily income of a farmer is approximately Rs. 27. This amount is abysmally low and insufficient for even basic survival. It is this dire financial situation that has driven farmers and farm laborers to the brink, with many resorting to the tragic step of ending their lives. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), since 1995, nearly 400,000 farmers and farm laborers across India have committed suicide. Closer to home, a survey conducted by three prominent universities in Punjab between 2000 and 2015 revealed that 16,006 farmers in the state took their own lives during this period. It is deeply unfortunate that no proper, up-to-date record of suicides, by farmers and farm laborers is being maintained, which reflects a lack of seriousness towards addressing this crisis.

Punjab today is burdened with a debt of approximately Rs. 3.73 lakh crore. With a population of 3,20,00,000, this translates to an average debt of Rs. 1,00,000 per individual in the state. Meanwhile, the Central Government recently increased the salaries of Members of Parliament by 24%, citing the rise in the Inflationary Index as the reason. If inflation is a justification for enhancing our salaries, then, surely the farmers and labourers, who are the biggest victims of rising prices, deserve greater consideration. The Government must honor its commitment to double the income of farmers.

It is disheartening to note that while the Government has waived off loans worth Rs. 16 lakh crore for corporates, the debt of Rs. 3.73 lakh crore burdening Punjab's farmers has been ignored. I urge the Government to waive this debt to provide much-needed relief to the farming community. Instead of concrete action, we see only politics being played in the name of farmers and farm laborers, with no tangible results.

Sir, the Government currently provides Minimum Support Price (MSP) for 23 crops, but how many of these crops are actually procured at the fixed MSP? Farmers

* English translation of the original speech delivered in Punjabi.

are demanding a legal guarantee for MSP on all agricultural produce to ensure that they can recover at least the minimum input costs incurred in cultivation. This is not just a demand—it is a necessity for their survival. When farmers are forced to sell their produce at a loss due to the absence of assured MSP, they are pushed deeper into despair, often leading to suicide. This is the primary reason behind the ongoing farmer agitations across the country, including in Punjab, where they seek a legal guarantee for MSP. Furthermore, I propose that opening the international border between India and Pakistan for trade could significantly benefit Punjab's farmers. Enhanced trade opportunities would provide them with access to larger markets, thereby increasing their income and reducing their economic hardships.

In conclusion, I appeal to the Government to take immediate and concrete steps, namely, waive the debt of Punjab's farmers, ensure a legal guarantee for MSP, and explore trade opportunities that uplift the agricultural community. Thank you, Sir. *Sat Shri Akaal.*"

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The following hon. Members associated themselves with the matter raised by the hon. Member, Shri Sant Balbir Singh: Shri Niranjana Bishi (Odisha), Dr. V. Sivadasan (Kerala), Shri R. Girirajan (Tamil Nadu), Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shri A. A. Rahim (Kerala), Ms. Dola Sen (West Bengal), Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla (Tamil Nadu), Shri M. Shanmugam (Tamil Nadu) and Dr. Ashok Kumar Mittal (Punjab).

Shrimati Sagarika Ghose. 'Need to imbibe new global technologies by National Broadcaster'.

Need to imbibe new global technologies by National Broadcasters

SHRIMATI SAGARIKA GHOSE (West Bengal): Sir, new media technologies are shrinking the world. India's unique identity as a vibrant democracy rooted in diversity and pluralism is an asset to the international order and needs to be projected on the global stage. This can only happen if our national broadcaster, Doordarshan, aspires to becoming truly world-class. The Network Russia Today is rapidly expanding in taking the message of Russia to the world. Networks like Al Jazeera are using Government funding to project the Arab voice in the world. Doordarshan can play this role. But, for this, it needs top-class modern content and management. Seven decades after independence, India deserves a truly world-class public broadcaster as envisaged in the Prasar Bharati Act of 1990.[‡]

[‡] Expunged as ordered by the Chair.