

# *Indian farmers to step up protests after nine killed in violence*

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Indian farmers protesting against Sunday's killing of four farmers in Uttar Pradesh state, in Hyderabad, India [Mahesh Kumar A/AP]

New Delhi, October 4 (RHC)-- Farmers in India have vowed to intensify their months-long protest against laws aimed at liberalizing agriculture as tensions flare a day after nine people were killed in northern Uttar Pradesh state's Lakhimpur Kheri district.

The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday announced 4.5m Indian rupees (\$60,530) compensation to the families of the victims of Sunday's violence. The state government also said a retired High Court judge will investigate the incident.

The farmers, meanwhile, have decided to step up their protests against the contentious farm laws. "We'll intensify our agitation in Uttar Pradesh and other parts of the country to highlight the plight of innocent farmers," Dharmendra Malik, a senior leader of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, told Reuters news agency.

"The government might try to discredit the 10-month-long movement, but we will remain peaceful in our struggle."

Four farmers died on Sunday when a car owned by federal Minister of State for Home, Ajay Mishra, ran over protesting farmers in the Uttar Pradesh town of Lakhimpur Kheri, officials and farm leaders said.

Farm leaders alleged Mishra's son was in the car when it ran over the protesters, but the junior home minister denied it.

Mishra said his driver and three members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who were in the car, were all killed by the protesters in the violence that broke out after the incident. "They were beaten to death by the farmers," Mishra said in a statement.

Police also said they recovered the body of a local journalist from the spot where violence ensued Sunday but did not provide further details on how he was killed.

Farm unions in Hyderabad protesting against Sunday's killings [Mahesh Kumar A/AP]

On Monday, police registered a criminal complaint against 14 people, including the minister's son, in connection with the death of the four farmers.

The BJP also lodged a criminal complaint against the protesting farmers over the death of its members and the car driver, said Arvind Chaurasia, a senior official in charge of the district.

Farm leaders want action against the minister and his son, saying Mishra should be removed from office. The violence marked an escalation in continuing protests against agriculture laws that farmers say will shatter their livelihoods. The protests have lasted since the government passed the laws last September and have been one of the biggest challenges to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Last week, thousands of farmers gathered at the edges of the capital, New Delhi, to mark one year of the passage of what they call "black laws."

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