

Indian farmers return to hold nationwide protests against last year's agriculture laws

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Farmers block railway tracks as part of protests against farm laws during nationwide protests, in Sonipat, northern state of Haryana, India, September 27, 2021. © Reuters / Anushree Fadnavi

New Delhi, September 28 (RHC)-- Thousands of Indian farmers have renewed their protests by launching a nationwide strike against the agricultural reforms passed last year that are said to favor large, private corporations over small farmers.

On Monday, farmers gathered en masse across the country to demonstrate against legislation signed last September, which they say poses a serious threat to their livelihoods.

The laws deregulate agriculture to allow for private investment to come into the sector and permit farmers to sell produce to buyers outside of the government-regulated market. However, some fear that this could also leave farmers vulnerable to exploitation from big companies.

A prominent figure in the movement, Rakesh Tikait, told Reuters that “thousands of farmers have spread out to different districts to ensure a complete nationwide strike aimed at reminding the government to repeal the laws introduced to favor large private corporations.”

Images on Twitter showed protesters blocking railway stations and roads. One video purported to capture seas of cars stuck in traffic on the Delhi-Gurugram border.

The protests also reached as far as the southern region of Kerala, with crowds of people photographed gathered in solidarity with the cause in Trivandrum.

In July, farmers staged a sit-in near New Delhi’s parliament to urge the government to repeal the agricultural laws. Police escorted hundreds of farmers when they swarmed to a protest site in the capital, and some participants accused the police of upping security and carrying out identity checks before their arrival.

The protests have generally been peaceful, but a rally in January at the Red Fort complex in New Delhi resulted in police deploying tear gas after demonstrators broke through barricades and road blocks. One protester was killed and over 80 police officers were injured during the clash.

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