

### **39. Congress, commissioning agents and middleman are behind farmer protests on delhi border**

**By Gopal Krishna Agarwal,**

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) believes that some political organisations including Punjab's commission agents, middlemen and the Congress are behind the farmers' agitation going on at the Delhi border. BJP's national economic affairs spokesperson Gopal Krishna Agarwal claims that the new law led to a hit of six thousand crore rupees annually and that is why 25,000 commission agents began instigating the common farmer.

While the three newly created laws are in the interest of the farmer, the BJP hopes that the misunderstanding over the new laws among the farmers will be removed when correct information reaches them.

National spokesperson Gopal Krishna Agarwal, who plays the role of a bridge between the central government and the BJP in economic matters, told IANS that the history of the last 20 years shows that many committees have insisted on creating alternative markets for farmers. Whether it is the Swaminathan Committee, the Parliamentary Standing Committee or the Shanta Kumar Committee report, everybody advocated a paradigm shift in this direction.

Gopal Krishna Agarwal described the nexus between the farmers' agitation and the political parties. He said, "There are 25,000 commission agents in Punjab. The new law has hurt the earning of six thousand crore rupees annually. Eight and a half per cent of this was their commission. The way the new laws are being protested by spreading falsehoods over MSP and the Mandi system reeks of politics. I think political parties like the Congress and commission agents have done the job of instigating the farmers."

On the question of purchase of 100 per cent MSP, Agarwal said that the government bought only six per cent of the total production earlier, if you look at the Shanta Kumar report. Now, government procurement in the Modi government has gone up to 15 per cent. So, the Modi government is working much more for the welfare of farmers. People who are spreading confusion over MSP have to understand that the central government declares only minimum support price, while the state governments make the procurement. The state governments are not so financially strong that they can make 100 per cent procurement. Neither do they have proper storage capacity."

Why doesn't the government give a written assurance on MSP? Agarwal says the new law has nothing to do with MSP. So it is not a question of putting it in writing. "MSP is a different subject; it can be discussed at another forum. The government has already said that the present system of MSP is not being done away with. The way the system has been going on for 70 years, it will continue and so will the mandis. In today's date, the APMC's monopoly is the biggest problem for farmers. The commission agents compel the farmers to sell the crop in the local mandi because they get 8.5 per cent commission. The new law will ensure that farmers are able to sell the crop wherever they want."

Has the agitation taken shape because of lack of communication with farmer organisations? The BJP national spokesperson said that the government has held extensive discussions with farmers. "In view of the recommendations of several reports and after talks with farmer organisations, the ordinance on agricultural laws came in June. If somebody had a problem, they could have raised it in June itself. Now, there is agitation at the end of November. This shows that the farmers are being misled."

Are corporate houses being benefited with the relaxation in storage limits? On this question, the BJP spokesperson said that the capacity of warehousing in the country is low and needs to be enhanced. "This will happen only when private investment comes. The Essential Commodities Act in India was enacted in 1955 when there was a shortage of food grains in the country. Today, the country is grain surplus. At this time an attempt is being made to promote private investment by giving concessions in storage limits."