

## From the Press:

### **Punjab farmers face jail as banks file criminal cases**

The Indian Express reports that “scores of Punjab farmers ... have been convicted or are facing trial in criminal cases of cheque-bouncing filed by banks under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1938.” Apparently, the majority of these farmers qualify for a loan waiver because their holdings are so small. The farmers claim they were asked to sign blank cheques and hand them over to the bank, which is a practice that bank employees have accepted. So now, farmers have to furnish bonds (which might involve borrowing more money) to be released on bail. This vicious chain of events illustrates how broken the entire system of agricultural credit has become. The banks claim to have no choice but to engage in these activities because the government berates them for not giving more loans as well as for not recovering them.

### **Farmers’ march “disrupts traffic” in Patna**

The All India KisanSangharsh Coordination Committee has not stopped agitating and organising farmers. Last week, they marched in Patna and while most places didn’t cover it, *Times of India* reported it again mainly for the traffic disruption. This is a constant practice by large media outlets – ignoring the life-and-death reasons people strike and simply describing the inconvenience to middle-class readers.

### **Apathy show-cased as Empathy**

*The Hindu* reported that the two Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted by the centre to suggest measures on anti-lynching and prevention of harassment of women at work places have been put in cold storage. The supposed reason was the election code. The GoM on lynching was formed in July 23, 2018. It met twice and asked the high-level committee to give inputs. Other GoM on harassment of women was constituted in October last year. It met only once and tasked another sub-panel to compile a report. Both GoMs are not in a position to give their recommendations. This is how the governments used to function – commissions to be constituted only to side line the real issues.

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