

# Government-Corporate Nexus in Paddy Procurement in Punjab and Haryana

In Punjab and Haryana paddy procurement by central agencies like FCI starts from 1<sup>st</sup> October, every year. But this time as peasants were getting ready to bring paddy to the markets, central government in a letter declared that it will delay the procurement by 10 days. That means it will start procurement only after 11<sup>th</sup> of October. This was a big shock to the peasants of Punjab and Haryana as on the very first day i.e. on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct, about 1 lakh metric tons of paddy reached the markets of Punjab. It was impossible for them to wait for 10 more days outside because of the prolonged rainy season.

First, government wanted to harass the peasantry of Punjab and Haryana whom they think is the backbone of kisan movement. Second, if procurement is delayed by 10 days or more, peasants shall be forced to sell to private players/Corporates below MSP; thus, centre can bring Corporates into paddy purchase, through back door, which is one of the main agendas of the three agriculture laws. Third, FCI has written that it shall purchase only 171 lakh metric tons of paddy from Punjab, whereas the production is expected to be around 191 lakh metric tons. It can be easily understood that the centre is preparing ground for the corporates.

Though the government stated the reason for the delay – the moisture content by more than 17%. Another reason for delaying the purchase is that due to the collapse of APMCs in Bihar and UP, MSP there is just half that of the Punjab and Haryana. Hence dealers there, in collusion with the BJP government, are cheaply procuring the paddy in these states and are smuggling it to Punjab and Haryana to sell to FCI/mandis. But as there was a prolonged rainy season in UP and Bihar, paddy is coming late to these markets. So for the profits of their dealers' procurements in Haryana and Punjab are delayed. If paddy from these states is smuggled as is practice, then FCI purchase quota will be fulfilled much before and large number of peasants from Punjab and Haryana shall be thrown out of procurement process. Who will purchase their grain? They shall have no option but to surrender their grain to private players at rates much below the MSP. This is what and how government wants to implement its anti-peasant black laws through back door.

After pressure from the peasantry, Punjab government has sealed all its borders to stop interstate movement of paddy by private dealers.

## Agitation

Sumyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) took strong notice of these conspiracies of the governments and gave a call to gherao indefinitely at the residences of BJP MLAs and MPs in Haryana and ruling Congress and BJP MLAs and MPs in Punjab. On 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct., peasants took to streets and started gherao' of MLAs and MPs. Despite heavy police

barricading even the residence of Haryana CM in Karnal was gheraoed. Seeing the upsurge, central government has conceded and announced that it will start procurements from 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. This was a great victory for the united struggle of peasantry.

To add to it, the CM of Haryana exposed his pro-corporate face further through his letter to central minister, Piyush Goyal, wherein he suggests to increase the moisture limit from 17 to 19 percent, but at the same time proposes price reduction of Rs. 100 per quintal if moisture is 20%, Rs.200 if it is 21% and so on, reducing the price with increase in moisture percentage. That means for no fault of theirs, peasants produce is to be purchased much below declared MSP. This is what the government wants and this is how it is doing away with MSP by one or the other excuses. This government-Corporate nexus operating hand in glove, needs to be exposed and fought mercilessly.