

## Business

# Indian farmers clash with police

## Plight of farmers a major political issue in India

**NEW DELHI:** Indian police fired tear gas and water cannon yesterday in clashes with several thousand farmers marching to New Delhi to protest against recent agricultural reforms. The confrontation happened when police tried to stop the farmers, from the northern state of Punjab, crossing a bridge about 200 km from Delhi.

Armed with sticks and rocks, some of the farmers threw police barriers into the river below. The police opened fire with water cannon and tear gas, further enraging the protestors. After a two-hour stand-off, police eventually allowed the marchers to continue towards the capital. The plight of

farmers is a major political issue in India, with about 70 percent of rural households depending primarily on agriculture. Issues such as drought and mounting debt have been blamed for the suicides of thousands of farmers in recent years.

Legislation passed earlier this year means that farmers are now free to sell their produce to anyone at any price, instead of to state-controlled markets at fixed rates. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed this as a “complete transformation of the agriculture sector” that would empower “tens of millions of farmers” and encourage much-needed investment and modernization.

also urged quick action to “tackle the huge environmental threat it poses to Yemen & the Red Sea”. “We need urgent progress now. The Houthis must work with the UN to avoid a devastating oil spill,” he said in a tweet.

### Catastrophe looms

The UN has said an oil spill could be “catastrophic”, destroying Red Sea ecosystems, shutting down the fishing industry and closing Yemen’s lifeline Hodeida port for six months. Independent studies show it could affect countries as far away as Djibouti and Eritrea as well as Saudi Arabia and expose more than 8.4 million Yemenis – many already vulnerable due to famine after years of war – to heightened pollution.

An earlier agreement on access struck in July failed to materialize, but UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said this week that the new accord was more formal and represents “an important step forward in this critical work”. Houthi-run media quoted a senior official as saying a message had been sent to the United Nations welcoming the experts who would conduct the “urgent evaluation and maintenance”.

“The national side (Houthis) are currently waiting for a letter from the United Nations to inform the date of the arrival of the team of experts, after they have been granted the necessary visas to enter Yemen, and to start implementing the work assigned to them alongside the national technical team,” it said. “We hope that the United Nations will accelerate the implementation of the steps according to the agreement, and send the team of experts to carry out their duties quickly.”

In June, the Houthis said they wanted guarantees that the value of the oil on board the Safer would be used to pay salaries of their employees. But the Yemeni government has said the money for the oil should be used for health and humanitarian projects in the shattered country, which is again on the brink of famine. — AFP

But the main opposition Congress party, which is in power in Punjab and backs the protests, has argued the change leaves farmers at the mercy of large corporations. “For nearly two months, farmers have been protesting peacefully in Punjab without any problem,” Amarinder Singh, chief minister of Punjab, said yesterday. “I urge the BJP to direct their state governments not to indulge in such strong-arm tactics against the farm-

ers. The hands that feed the nation deserve to be held, not pushed aside,” he added.

The protesting farmers had also blocked the movement of trains in Punjab for the last two months, before yielding to public and government pressure and lifting the blockade. Yesterday’s stand-off resulted in a long traffic hold-up on one of India’s busiest national highways linking New Delhi to several northern states. — AFP

## Houthis confirm green light for tanker repair

**DUBAI:** Yemen’s Houthi rebels confirmed they have given the green light for a UN mission to inspect and repair a long-abandoned fuel tanker which threatens to rupture and cause a massive oil spill. The UN has been trying to assess the “FSO Safer” for years, but the Iran-backed Houthis – who control much of Yemen’s north after a war that erupted in 2014 – have so far denied access.

“An urgent maintenance agreement and a comprehensive evaluation of the Safer tanker was signed with the United Nations in order to avoid an environmental catastrophe,” senior rebel commander Mohamed Ali Al-Houthi said in a tweet late Wednesday. The UN said earlier this week that the operation could begin by late January or early February, depending on when it could obtain the necessary equipment.

The 45-year-old vessel, abandoned near the western port of Hodeida since 2015, has 1.1 million barrels of crude on board, and a rupture or explosion would have disastrous environmental and humanitarian consequences. Apart from corrosion to the ageing vessel, essential work to curb explosive gases in its storage tanks has been neglected.

Greenpeace welcomed the development but said it was “long overdue”. “Every day that the Safer is left unattended brings us another day closer to an humanitarian and environmental catastrophe that will further deepen the current tragedy in Yemen, and cause untold damage to the land, sea and air around the region,” said spokesman Ahmed El Droubi.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab

## ABK Congratulates Winners of the Salary Transfer Draw

*‘Transfer your salary and get a 0% interest loan’*



**A**l Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the names of 2 winners for the month of November for the “Transfer your Salary and Find Reasons to Smile” monthly draw campaign, held on 19th November

2020, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The lucky winners who will each receive the equivalent of their monthly salaries are:

| November 2020 | CHERRY MAY VELASQUEZ FAJARDO |
|---------------|------------------------------|
|               | ISMAEIL MOHAMMAD AHMAD MOUSA |

The final draw will be held on 10th December, 2020. The salary campaign offers ABK salary account customers a range of exceptional rewards. Kuwaiti salary account holders will receive cash gifts up to KD 1,000 provided they transfer a salary equivalent to/or higher than KD 500. Moreover, Kuwaiti customers are eligible for a 0% interest loan of up to KD 10,000 and expatriates up

to KD 5,000. These loans are subject to ABK’s terms and conditions, as well as the Central Bank of Kuwait’s regulations and policies.

For more information about the Salary Campaign and other ABK products kindly visit [eahli.com](http://eahli.com) or contact an ABK customer service agent via ‘Ahlan Ahli’ at 1899899.