

# END THE IMPASSE: ON PROLONGED IMPASSE OVER THREE FARM LAWS

Relevant for: Economy | Topic: Agriculture Issues and related constraints

The time may have come for a more concerted effort by the Government and the protesting farmers to find a solution to the prolonged [impasse over the three agriculture-related laws](#) enacted last year. The [Supreme Court has emphasised that public roads](#) cannot be blocked indefinitely by protesters. In an observation in the context of more petitions from members of the public, complaining that their right of free movement has been curtailed by the ongoing protests by farmers, the Court has said a solution has to be found, that roads cannot be blocked for long and there is no reason for it to lay down the law again and again. The reference was to last year's judgment on the Shaheen Bagh protest against the [Citizenship \(Amendment\) Act](#), wherein it was held that public ways and public spaces cannot be blocked indefinitely even during a peaceful protest. The observation can be seen either as a disapproval of the tactic of holding interminable protests or as an implicit criticism of the Government for being unable to find a solution to the farmers' grievances. Even while denying that they are responsible for the hardship faced by the public, and blaming the police for the blockade, the farmers say they should be allowed to continue their agitation at the Ramlila Maidan. However, the Government will have none of it, recalling the unsavoury incidents that took place on Republic Day when the protest rolled into the Capital.

The conflict between the two competing rights — freedom to protest and the right to free movement of the public — is not the only aspect that requires immediate attention. There seems to be no attempt to break the deadlock on the core issue, with the farmers demanding an outright repeal of the laws and statutory validation for the claim that the MSP regime will not come to an end. Late last year, the protesting farmers and Union Ministers did come to a partial agreement on decriminalising stubble-burning and safeguarding power subsidies, but the two core demands have not seen any breakthrough. It is not out of place to recall that an expert committee constituted by the Court has submitted its report, but nothing has been heard about it after that. To an extent, the fact that the Court has not taken it up again or made the report public may be a factor in the continuing impasse. An expedited hearing that involves further review of the panel's recommendations, or any such similar initiative from the Government, is needed to arrive at a solution. The objective must not be merely to resolve the incidental issue of blocked roads, but to reconcile or eliminate the deep differences over what the Government sees as necessary reforms in the farm sector. Any reform that seeks to eliminate distortions in the sector must also win the confidence of farmers, the principal stakeholders.

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**END**

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