ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 214

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 15, 2021

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY
District 7 (Burlington)
Assemblyman LOUIS D. GREENWALD
District 6 (Burlington and Camden)
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District 18 (Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Expresses support for Sikh farmer protests in India.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/5/2021)

A JOINT RESOLUTION expressing support for the Sikh farmer protests in India in response to the Indian Agriculture Acts of 2020.

WHEREAS, More than 60 percent of India's 1.3 billion people rely primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, despite the fact that agriculture only accounts for 15 percent of the country's gross domestic income; and

WHEREAS, Since the 1960s, the Indian government has implemented minimum support prices on specific goods, such as rice and wheat, and allowed for the sale of products in government-controlled markets, known as mandis, to prevent farmer exploitation; and

WHEREAS, Minimum support prices act as insurance for farmers when they sell particular crops which are procured by government agencies at the price promised to farmers and cannot be altered by any outside factors; and

WHEREAS, In September 2020, the Indian Parliament enacted the Indian Agriculture Acts of 2020 which will allow large corporations to take over the agriculture industry in India, create private commodity exchanges with no government oversight, and will eliminate mandis, which are heavily relied on by villages to support infrastructure, education, and employment; and

WHEREAS, The legislation does not mention the minimum support prices, which have historically provided a safety net to Indian farmers should the price of goods drop, regardless of market conditions; and

WHEREAS, Farmers in India are concerned that the exclusion of minimum support prices in the legislation will result in the end of such support, allowing large corporations to set prices that would further disadvantage the already struggling Indian farming community; and

WHEREAS, Indian farmers have been demonstrating and striking in opposition to the legislation, and have asked the Indian government to repeal the acts and guarantee the minimum support prices with new legislation; and

WHEREAS, Tens of thousands of Indian farmers have attempted to peacefully assemble in India to protest the legislation, but, in some instances, have been met by Indian security forces who have brutally cracked down on their expression of democracy; and

WHEREAS, According to reports, the Indian government's attempts to squash peaceful protests have included constructing blockades, destroying roads, using water cannons and tear gas, and carrying out other forms of violence that have resulted in civilian fatalities; and

WHEREAS, Farmers in India have been struggling for many years, despite government subsidies and tax exemptions, due to low crop prices, rising operation costs for farms, recent demonetization of banknotes, and widespread droughts; and

WHEREAS, The suicide rate among farmers in India has been steadily increasing, and much of the increase is attributed to massive debts taken on by farmers in recent years; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 60 deaths have occurred since the start of the demonstrations that have been attributed to illness due to cold temperatures and close living conditions in the camps set up by protesters outside of Delhi, and suicide; and

WHEREAS, The majority of farmers participating in the strike are a part of the Sikh community and are from the Punjab and Haryana provinces of India; and

WHEREAS, The provinces of Punjab and Haryana are home to the largest Sikh population in India and have well developed mandis, which farmers heavily rely on; and

WHEREAS, The strikes in India have spurred protests in solidarity with the farmers among Sikh communities across the globe with many rallies taking place in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Rallies in support of Sikh farmers in India are now occurring in New Jersey, with residents across the State participating in car parades to stand in solidarity with the farmers in India; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey is home to one of the largest populations of Sikh Americans in the United States and many of them care deeply about this matter, as they have family in India or are only a generation or two removed from India; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey, which is known as the "Garden State" and has a long and proud history of agriculture, should be committed to promoting farmer prosperity, especially in minority communities like the Sikh community in India; and

WHEREAS, The Sikh community has made positive social, cultural, economic, and political contributions to the State of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature and the Governor should recognize the plight of the Sikh farming community in India and support ongoing peaceful protests which farmers feel are essential to protecting their livelihood; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Legislature and the Governor express their support for the ongoing farmers' protests in India in response to the Indian Agriculture Acts of 2020, which may threaten the livelihood of

thousands of struggling Sikh farmers in the country. The Legislature and the Governor also call on the Indian government to ends its anti-democratic crackdown on the Indian farmer protests, and to provide economic relief to Punjab farmers.

2. The Legislature and the Governor further urge the members of New Jersey's Congressional Delegation to take necessary actions to support Indian farmers, condemn the anti-democratic practices of the Indian government, and to raise continued awareness about the issue.

3. Copies of this joint resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate or the Clerk of the General Assembly to the President of the United States, the United States Secretary of State, the United States Secretary of Agriculture, the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey, the Consulate General of India in New York, and to each member of Congress elected from this State.

4. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This joint resolution expresses support for the Sikh farmer protests that have taken place in India in response to the Indian Agriculture Acts of 2020.

The Indian Agriculture Acts, adopted by the Indian Parliament in September 2020, would, among other things, end the minimum support prices which have historically provided a safety net to Indian farmers should the price of goods drop, regardless of market conditions. Farmers in India are concerned that exclusion of the minimum support prices in the legislation will result in the end of such support, allowing large corporations to set prices that would further disadvantage the already-struggling Indian farmer community. Indian farmers have been demonstrating and striking in opposition to the legislation, and have asked the Indian government to repeal the acts and to guarantee the minimum support pricing. However, in some instances, protestors have been met by Indian security forces, who have brutally cracked down on this expression of democracy. The majority of farmers participating in the strike are a part of the Sikh community and are from the Punjab and Haryana provinces of India.

The farmer strikes in India have spurred protests in solidarity with the farmers among Sikh communities across the globe, with many rallies taking place across the United States. Rallies in

support of Sikh farmers in India are now occurring in New Jersey, with residents across the State participating in car parades to stand in solidarity with the farmers in India. New Jersey is home to one of the largest populations of Sikh Americans in the United States and many of them care deeply about this matter, as they have family in Punjab or are only a generation or two removed from India. This resolution would recognize the plight of the Sikh farming community in India and support the ongoing peaceful and democratic protests which Indian farmers feel are essential to protecting their livelihood. The resolution would further urge the members of New Jersey's Congressional Delegation to take necessary actions to support Indian farmers, condemn the anti-democratic practices of the Indian government, and to raise continue awareness about the issue.