

Protesters Rally at Minister's Home Over Land Pooling Concerns



Hundreds of rural and farm workers staged a protest on Monday outside the residence of Punjab minister Mohinder Bhagat, demanding the withdrawal of a controversial land pooling policy. The demonstrators, who included men and women from several districts, believe the new policy will harm laborers and benefit corporations.

The protest, organized by a joint front of labor organizations, saw participants from Nawanshahr, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, and Jalandhar. According to labor leader Kashmir Singh Ghugshor, their demands include permanent employment guarantees, a monthly allowance of Rs 1,000 for women as promised during elections, and an increase in pension amounts. They also called for one-third of all village council land to be leased to laborers from the Dalit community at reasonable rates.

A central point of contention is the state government's land pooling policy, which protesters argue will lead to the "appropriation of Punjab's fertile lands by corporate houses." Labor leaders believe this will displace farmers and have a disastrous impact on rural and farm workers who are already struggling. They insist the policy should be immediately revoked.

In addition to protesting the policy, the demonstrators called for the release of labor leaders who they claim have been detained. Leaders such as Tarsem Peter and Darshan Nahar addressed the crowd, accusing the government of being "anti-labor" and supportive of corporate entities and landlords. They also alleged that police repression is being used to suppress the democratic rights of protesters.

Minister Mohinder Bhagat emerged from his home to accept a memorandum of demands from the protesters. He assured them that he would facilitate a meeting with the chief minister to address the outstanding issues.

The land pooling policy, which aims to acquire approximately 65,000 acres for urban and commercial development, has faced growing opposition across the state. Farmers' groups have also held numerous tractor marches and rallies, with many raising objections to the policy. They argue that while the government presents the scheme as a way for landowners to partner in development, it lacks transparency and poses a threat to their livelihoods.