

# THE BEACON

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## Rihanna takes farmer-protest awareness global

Nishitha Rachel

Celebrities and activists from around the world extended their support to the farmers' movement in India after American pop singer Rihanna tweeted on the situation on Wednesday.

"We stand in solidarity with the farmer protests in India," wrote teenage Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg on Twitter, using the hashtag #FarmersProtest.

Thunberg's tweet also included a CNN article about the Central government's decision to block internet services at three protest sites near Delhi borders.

Internet was also suspended in districts of Haryana following violence on Republic Day.

Rihanna shared the same



Farmers protesting against the New Farm Bill  
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CNN article, asking "why aren't we talking about this?!" [sic]"

The tweet went viral within hours, with many social media users lauding her for speaking up at a time when many Bollywood celebrities are silent on the matter.

Other celebrities that spoke up and lauded Rihanna for speaking up included comedienne and YouTuber Lilly Singh, actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and adult-entertainment actor Mia Khalifa.

Other prominent names who

raised their voice included author Meena Harris, who is also the niece of US Vice-President Kamala Harris

They not only praised Rihanna for speaking up but also criticised Twitter for the social media platform's recent actions of temporarily blocking dozens of accounts in India, including that of Caravan magazine.

Several Bollywood personalities countered the move, even as India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) censured the global celebrities.

Actor Akshay Kumar quoted the MEA's statement and said in a tweet: "Let's support an amicable resolution, rather than paying attention to anyone creating differences."

Actor Ajay Devgn and filmmaker Karan Johar also joined the bandwagon.

## MEA pulls up international celebs for tweets on ryots

Alwin Benjamin Soji

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in a statement on Wednesday, February 3 asked foreign individuals to ascertain the facts and have proper understanding about the issue before commenting on them.

The move came after singer Rihanna and environmental activist Greta Thunberg commented on the farmers' protests, which opened the floodgates for similar comments from all over.

The ministry, in a statement, said, "The Parliament of India, after a full debate and discussion, passed reformist legislation relating to the

agricultural sector. These reforms gave expanded market access and provided greater flexibility to farmers. They also pave the way for economically and ecologically sustainable farming."

It added: "Yet, it is unfortunate to see vested interest groups trying to enforce their agenda on these protests, and derail them. This was egregiously witnessed on January 26, India's Republic Day."

The statement also said, "Before rushing to comment on such matters, we would urge that the facts be ascertained, and a proper understanding of the issues at hand be undertaken."

## Covid-19: India fastest to vaccinate 4 million

Arakkal Shada Amina

**BENGALURU:** The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare claimed on Wednesday, February 3, that India had been the fastest in the world to reach the 4-million mark when it came to vaccinating people, reaching the milestone in mere 18 days.

It said in a statement that India was one of the top five countries in the world in terms of administering vaccine doses, and that it would continue its vaccination drive at a fast pace.

As of 8 am on Wednesday, 41 lakh people had received the vaccine, including 18 lakh healthcare workers, the

ministry said in the statement.

On the daily front, 14 states and Union Territories (UTs) — the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Lakshadweep, Ladakh, Sikkim, Manipur, Puducherry, Goa, Odisha, and Assam — did not report any deaths due to Covid-19 on Tuesday.

The statement also said 31 states and UTs have less than 5,000 active cases each at the moment.

India's active cases have also declined to a total of 1,60,057 in the same 24-hour time frame, the statement went on to note.

## Delhi industrials opt for cleaner fuel

Sudarshani

Delhi's industrial units are now operating with cleaner fuel because the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and its Adjoining Areas has got them to switch from Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to Piped Natural Gas (PNG), which is a cleaner fuel, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change said in a statement on Wednesday,



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February 3.

The move is expected to usher in cleaner air for Delhi, which often sees a lot of air pollution, especially during

the winter months.

As usage of cleaner fuels is one of the priority action items of the newly formed commission, 1,607 industrial

units across 50 industrial areas in the national capital have already switched over to PNG, said the statement, adding that the remaining 20 are expected to switch over by the end of this month.

PNG has been made available to 1,627 identified industrial areas at their doorstep, said the ministry.

Delhi's AQI (air quality index) stands at 235 and PM (particulate matter) at 2.5 which is very harmful. This initiative strives to reduce the usage of polluting fuels.

## Kerala theatre-owners stick to half occupancy

Athul Krishna

**THRISSUR:** Theatre-owners in Kerala are sticking to the state's mandate of 50-percent occupancy despite the Central government allowing theatres to run at full occupancy from February 1.

The Kerala government order is a result of the rapid rise in daily Covid-19 cases in the state.

Premachandran, a theatre-owner from Thrissur, said, "In a situation where the state reports 5,000 to 7,000 Covid-19 cases daily, it is not easy for us to maintain health



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protocols and social distancing inside the theatre with 100 percent occupancy. So, the state government's order of maintaining 50-percent occupancy in theatres makes sense."

Sandeep P Nambeeshan,

manager of a theatre from Thrissur, said: "The number of people coming to the theatres had declined considerably due to the pandemic. The fear of Covid-19 has kept families from watching a movie in theatres.

So, increasing the occupancy of the audience won't make a great impact on the financial situation of theatre-owners."

George, another theatre-owner from Thrissur, said, "As we can leave space between each seat, it is easy for us to maintain social distancing with 50-percent occupancy. But it is not possible in the case of full occupancy."

He added: "In the current situation, it is better to follow the state government's decision and restrict the number of audience to control the daily Covid-19 cases."



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