

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مېباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

BY N.D. JAYAPRAKASH

09.02.2021

## Conspiracy to Malign Farmers' Movement in India



Photograph Source: Randeep Maddoke; randeepphotoartist@gmail.com – [CC0](#)

### **Why was Red Fort Left Unguarded When Delhi was on “High Alert”?**

*For over two months now, hundreds of thousands of farmers have been waging an unprecedented struggle at five locations around the National Capital Region of Delhi against three farm laws, which essentially seek to hand over control of India’s agricultural sector to large corporate houses. These farm laws were rushed through parliament without either consulting farmers unions or listening to any objections raised by the opposition in parliament. After eleven rounds of talks with representatives of the Central Government ended in failure, the farmers unions decided to intensify the struggle by holding a tractor parade on India’s Republic Day, i.e., January 26, 2021.*

*Permission was granted by the Delhi Police to hold the tractor parade on designated routes at three locations 20 to 30 kilometers away from the city centre. During the parade, agent provocateurs mislead a section of the agitated farmers to move away from the designated*

*routes with their tractors and move to the city centre, where the historic Red Fort is situated. Red Fort is the 17<sup>th</sup> century monument where India's National Flag is hoisted on Independence Day, i.e. on 15 August every year. After the breakaway sections arrived at the Red Fort, unwarranted violence broke out (and at another location enroute). Farmers' unions believe that the violence was engineered to malign the farmers' movement and to divert media attention away from the main tractor parade, which was an unprecedented success. Using the outbreak of violence as the excuse, the Indian Government is trying to do all it can to suppress the farmers' movement. This article is an attempt to describe what actually transpired on January 26, 2021.*

For several years now, a few days prior to Republic Day, a state of "high alert" regarding security threat is invariably declared over the entire city of Delhi. This year too a "high alert" was proclaimed on January 17, 2021 by the Delhi Police through a circular. According to the above ABP News Bureau report:

"Delhi Police is on high alert regarding the farmer protesters sitting at the borders. Ahead of Republic Day celebration, Delhi Police has posted posters of Khalistan terrorists in all the crowded areas, which they are looking for. The police suspect that these terrorist organizations can carry out a big conspiracy." (Circulars issued by the Delhi Police in January 2021 are inaccessible; they have not been uploaded on its web portal.)

Yet, despite such a state of "high alert", Punjabi actor Deep Sidhu and his companions easily managed to barge into the Red Fort premises through its main entrance on Republic Day! When the Delhi Police had sounded an alarm about likely terrorist threats that Delhi could face ahead of the Republic Day, how and why was a key national monument like the Red Fort so easy to access on January 26, 2021?

It is a known fact that the Red Fort has been a target of terrorist attacks on several occasions in the past:

+ On December 22, 2000, one such attack resulted in the deaths of two security guards and a civilian.

+ On October 12, 2016, it faced another terrorist threat.

+ In February and May 2017, explosives were recovered from wells within its premises.

Therefore, the question of downgrading security requirements for guarding Red Fort could not have been entertained. On the contrary, as per even the controversial MoU signed with Dalmia Bharat Limited on April 13, 2018, regarding the maintenance of the heritage site, its security was to be upgraded by installing "[a]dvanced surveillance systems (Like PTZ based CCTV cameras)" (page 3).

In fact, since Independence, the monument has remained under the control of the Indian Army, protected by military guards. After the Army handed over the heritage site to the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) in 2003, the Red Fort has been under the protection of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which

fall directly under the control of the Union Government's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Then how did Deep Sidhu and his companions manage to reach the ramparts of the Red Fort unhindered? Unless the security forces had consciously allowed them in?

The provocative acts perpetrated at the Red Fort on January 26, 2021 by [Deep Sidhu and his accomplices](#) were unprecedented. Later, when some farmers who had accompanied Deep Sidhu to the Red Fort realized that they had been duped, they were ready to take him to task. To save himself, [Sidhu fled from the spot on a motorbike](#) and has gone underground since.

The question is, can anyone just barge into the Red Fort unhindered and unfurl any flag on its ramparts at any time of his or her choice? If not, then:

- + who facilitated their unchecked entry into the historic Fort through its main entrance?
- + how did Deep Sidhu and his accomplices manage to stay put on the ramparts and keep the Sikh religious flag, the Nishan Sahib, fluttering for a considerable duration; and
- + how did they escape from the Red Fort unscathed when they should have been arrested on the spot?

These questions point to a larger question – what are the kind of political connections that an agent-provocateur like Deep Sidhu has to give him such a charmed life. The answer is revealing — Sidhu was the [election agent of BJP\\* candidate Sunny Deol](#) in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. That he was probably considered a person of high utility is signaled by the fact that special meetings were arranged for him with [Prime Minister Modi](#) and Home Minister [Amit Shah](#). No wonder the fact that Deep Sidhu and his accomplices entered through the main gate of the Red Fort with such ease on a day when the monument was officially [closed to the public until January 31](#), begs the question – could they have done this unaided?

[\*Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) is India's current ruling party]

It is important to point out that there are no indications, or allegations, that the solid iron grill gate at the main entrance to the Red Fort was forced open. This can only mean that they were let in. Since the monument is under the protection of the CISF and the CRPF, are we then to think that they let Deep Sidhu and his accomplices into the Red Fort? If so, the resulting dereliction of duty constitutes a serious breach of security for which none other than the MHA should be held accountable.

While [sedition charges under Section 124A of IPC have been registered](#) (presumably against those who had illegally entered the monument), apparently no inquiry has been instituted so far to unravel who had directed the CRPF to permit the illegal entry of unauthorized persons into the Red Fort on a day when entry to the monument was officially closed to the public.

The double standards adopted by the Central Government in investigating two similar security breaches are glaring. While the Delhi Police has constituted a [Special Cell to investigate the security breach near the Israeli Embassy](#) that was unable to prevent a low

intensity explosion on January 29, no such inquiry has been instituted so far to investigate the security breach at the Red Fort on January 26.

The bulk of the mainstream media too has been less than even-handed – even as ample coverage is accorded to the blast near the Israeli Embassy, news about the Red Fort security breach has been practically swept under the carpet!

### **Flagging the motive**

What exactly was the purpose of unfurling the Sikh religious flag on the ramparts of the Red Fort on January 26 when no flag other than the National Flag was permitted to be hoisted on the national monument after Independence? The pretext that it was to uphold the cause of the farmers does not hold; on the contrary, it is more likely that the devious move was hatched to provoke outrage and actually denigrate the farmers' movement.

There certainly is ground for expressing deep indignation at what transpired. However, from the highly sensational manner in which the Hindutva Rightwing and sections of the media propagating their agenda played up the incident — claiming that the National Flag had been replaced by a “Khalistani” flag on the Red Fort ramparts by the farmers — it was difficult not to believe that there was a scripted element to the sequence of events.

Moreover, Deep Sidhu's histrionics can in no way be compared to the organized events of March 08-09, 2014 (and subsequent ones) which was to commemorate the 'Fateh Diwas' – a historical event as an article in *The Wire* by Kanika Singh titled “In 2014, the Sikh Flag Flew at the Red Fort – And the Hindu Rightwing Had No Complaints” (27.01.2021) argues. From the photograph of the 'Fateh Diwas' of 2016 published along with the said article, it is evident that the Sikh flags (the Nishan Sahib) were flown in the grounds outside the Red Fort and not on its ramparts. As far as it can be gathered, as per the protocol instituted after Independence, there is no scope for unfurling any flag other than the National Flag on the ramparts of the Red Fort.

As videos of the turn of events at the Red Fort on Republic Day show, there were instances of brutal attacks on the police on the edge of the moat in front of the monument. While the footage of the mindless attack on the police that was recorded from a vantage point is heart-rending, the question is what was the farmers' movement supposed to gain by viciously attacking the police when these farmers had already reached the Red Fort?

### **Why Did the Police “Fail” to Stop the Tractors at the Barricades?**

The truth is that the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is spearheading the farmers' movement, had no plans to go anywhere near the Red Fort on January 26, 2021. Therefore, the concerted attempt by the powers that be to hold the SKM responsible for all the unruly events at the Red Fort on January 26, 2021, reeks of a calculated conspiracy to malign the SKM.

On its part, the MHA may have slapped UAPA and sedition charges on the SKM leadership as a show of prompt action, but in reality, it is the Home Ministry which needs to explain to

the people of India as to how hundreds of tractor-riding farmers not only managed to cross the supposedly heavily barricaded entry points into the city centre but also succeeded in breaching the tight security at the entrance to the Red Fort, climbing on to its ramparts to plant the Sikh religious flag there unhindered.

As per the agreement arrived between the farmers' unions associated with the SKM and the Delhi Police on January 24, 2021, three specific routes near the border areas of Delhi (which were roughly about 20 to 30 kms away from the city centre) were chosen for holding the Tractor Parade by farmers on Republic Day.

However, some sections of farmers who were not associated with the SKM had made a public announcement on January 25, 2021, that they would not abide by the said agreement between the SKM and the Delhi Police. Instead, they took a decision to proceed east from the scheduled turning point on NH-44 (just ahead of Mukarba Chowk) on to the Outer Ring Road, which would have led further into the city centre and directly to Red Fort situated about 20 kms away. This was contrary to the decision to turn away from the city in the north-west direction. Similarly, a section of farmers at the Ghazipur border (in East Delhi) too had decided to proceed to the Red Fort in defiance of the SKM-Police agreement regarding the Tractor Parade route.

On the same evening, while leaders of the SKM were busy making plans for the scheduled Tractor Parade the following day, some miscreants – in the absence of the SKM leadership – occupied the stage at the Singhu border protest site to sow confusion regarding the manner of holding the Tractor Parade. According to [\*The Indian Express\* \(Delhi, 27.01.2021\)](#):

“For about six hours, from 6 pm to midnight, a group of youths hijacked the stage to oppose the route agreed upon between SKM leaders and Delhi Police. Their protest was webcast live on some Punjabi web channels as well as some individual social media accounts. Initially, it was some unknown faces, demanding that SKM leaders come on the stage and answer their questions regarding the route decided for the tractor parade. But later, some known faces, like Lakhbir Singh Sidhana alias Lakha Sidhana (40), gangster-turned-politician and president of the Malwa Youth Federation, and Punjabi film actor Deep Sidhu, who campaigned for the [\*BJP\*](#)'s [\*Sunny Deol\*](#) in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, addressed the crowd.... ‘Thousand of youths want to take the Ring Road. The Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee has already decided to take the Ring Road. They are protesting ahead of us, so our tractors will be behind them. So if anyone wants to go on Ring Road, they can follow the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee...’ Sidhana told the gathering.”

Satnam Singh Pannu of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) has also confirmed that KMSC had taken a decision in advance to oppose the SKM-Police agreement regarding the route of the Tractor Parade. [According to a NDTV report dated 27.01.2021](#):

“Mr Pannu said the change of route was not unannounced. ‘We had declared at the outset that we would take the Outer Ring Road.’”

In this regard, BKU president Balbir Singh Rajewal has expressed apprehensions about the [reported meeting between KMSC members and the police](#): *“We got to know that police also held a meeting with the [KMS]committee members on January 25 night. What was the meeting all about?”* While the Delhi Police were fully aware of the attempts by some farmers to violate the SKM-Police agreement on the Tractor Parade route, it appears that they refrained from taking adequate preventive steps to thwart attempts by some sections of farmers to deviate from the agreed route.

Since the SKM did not insist on a written undertaking from the Delhi Police that the police would not permit anyone to deviate from the agreed route, the loophole seems to have been conveniently exploited. All that the police needed to do was to keep the barricades at various entry points to the city such as Mukarba Chowk, Nangloi Chowk and Ghazipur border porous and to merely pretend to resist those who sought to break the barricades.

That is precisely what had happened. According to a report in [The Tribune \(Chandigarh\) dated 26.01.2021](#):

“Despite being shunned by farmer unions at various stages of the ongoing anti-farm law agitation, Deep Sidhu has been attempting to take a leadership role in the movement for the past several months.... On Monday evening, Deep Sidhu took over the main stage at Singhu, and along with gangster-turned-social activist **Lakha Sidhana**, announced they would hold the march ‘inside Delhi’.... They had a plan ready by Tuesday morning. First, they started a march of their own much before the official march of the farmer unions, and positioned their ‘henchmen’ in large numbers at a road turning towards central Delhi. From there they directed other tractors towards the Red Fort instead of the agreed route. At one point of time, volunteers of farmer unions tried to intervene in this, but they were outnumbered by the Deep Sidhu and Lakha Sidhana group.

At Mukarba Chowk, the police did not even make pretence of preventing sections of farmers led by Deep Sidhu and KMSC – who set off from the Singhu border much before the agreed time – from moving on to the Outer Ring Road. The police actually left the by-pass from NH-44 to the eastern-side of the Outer Ring Road almost un-barricaded, which was no hindrance to the free movement of tractors towards Red Fort.

According to a report in *The Times of India* (Delhi, 27.01.2021): *“Containers blocking the road near Balswa landfill [Mukarba Chowk] removed by farmers using tractors, cranes and earthmovers”* (p.2) While farmers were travelling on tractors, it is most unlikely they had brought cranes and earthmovers with them. Should we not ask one simple question – how is it that cranes and earthmovers were conveniently left at the spot by the police while purportedly barricading the spot, which the farmers who came there readily made use of.

At the same time, farmers, who had missed the designated right turn from NH-44 towards SGT Nagar (in the north-west direction away from the city) and had proceeded ahead, were



entrapped at Mukarba Chowk when the police prevented them taking a U-turn towards SGT Nagar.

The mishandling of the situation by the police resulted in an unwarranted clash between the aggrieved farmers who had lost their way but were intent on going towards SGT Nagar. As per available reports from some participants, the police also tried to misguide farmers by prodding them to move towards Red Fort via Outer Ring Road and G.T. Karnal Road instead of directing them towards SGT Nagar – the designated route. The happenings at the Ghazipur border and Nangloi Chowk were almost similar.

Did the Delhi Police not have the wherewithal and the competence to effectively block the movement of tractors and farmers towards Red Fort? That does not appear to be the case. Expressing his views on the matter [in an article in \*The Quint\* dated 27.01.2021, Dr.N.C.Asthana](#) (former Director General of Police, Kerala, and Additional Director General of the CRPF and BSF for a long time) said:

“First, there are non-lethal ways of preventing people from entering a certain area.... Second, a whole science of physical barriers has been developed; the devices range from Caltraps, Shallow-Mounted Wedge Barriers, to heavy Bollards. Even caltraps could have been deployed very quickly to stop tractors. Shallow-Mounted Wedge Barriers are also effective devices to stop vehicles.”

Dr. Asthana was very critical about the insipid manner in which the Delhi Police had mishandled the matter. According to him:

“...they should have put up ‘effective barricades’ in several layers. **The barricading used was not effective.**” [Emphasis added]

The failure to use effective barricading was the underlying reason that resulted in hundreds of tractors and farmers moving 20 km inside the city to reach Red Fort unhindered. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that the Delhi Police were merely pretending that they did not have the means or the ability to stop tractors and farmers at the designated points using non-lethal means. The police are in fact guilty of creating unnecessary chaos.

The truth is that the police were never serious in executing the agreement with the farmers’ unions. On the contrary, it does seem that the police aided and abetted the movement of farmers led by Deep Sidhu and KMSC towards the Red Fort. Of course, the police may have been acting under instructions from above. That there was a conscious attempt to sabotage the peaceful conduct of the Tractor Parade is very apparent.

It is also a fact that while agent-provocateurs enacted their assigned roles to perfection by attacking the police to provoke them and create mayhem at ITO and the Red Fort, the vast majority of farmers who strayed away from the designated Tractor Parade route by mistake remained peaceful and conducted themselves in an exemplary fashion. There are also reports from local volunteers that on the Tikri-Nangloi route, some miscreants had attacked the Tractor Parade disguised as policemen.

It is difficult not to conclude that there was, indeed, a deep conspiracy to malign the farmer's movement. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to conduct a full-fledged inquiry into how and why the Red Fort was left unguarded on January 26, 2021 and why the Delhi Police miserably failed to effectively barricade the three entry points into the city at Mukarba Chowk, Ghazipur border and at Nangloi Chowk.

[The article was earlier published in *The Wire*.]

FEBRUARY 8, 2021

*N.D. Jayaprakash is Joint Secretary, Delhi Science Forum and Co-Convenor, Bhopal Gas Peedith Sangharsh Sahayog Samiti (Coalition for supporting the Cause of the Bhopal Gas Victims).*