

'Congress playing politics with loans'

PM accuses party of cheating farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Opposition Congress, without naming the party, on Saturday of misleading and cheating farmers of the country in the name of loan waiver.

He was laying the foundation stone for the remaining part of the North Koel Reservoir, also known as Mandal Dam project, in Palamu district of Jharkhand. On completion, the dam will irrigate 19,604 hectares in Jharkhand and neighbouring Bihar.

"Earlier, they forced farmers to take loans and now they are using the issue to play politics... had they completed this North Koel Reservoir project on time, farmers of this area would not have had to borrow and plunge themselves into poverty...for us farmers are *anadata* (food provider) but for them (previous governments) they were a mere vote bank," he said. "My government works for the benefit of the farmers, to strengthen their hands by completing such irrigation projects... most of which are in the last stage of completion."

"We're spending ₹90,000 crore, or about ₹1 lakh crore, on irrigation

Jharkhand villagers take out a march

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Thousands of villagers took out a march in Palamu district on Friday to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding compensation against their likely displacement by the North Koel Reservoir project. However, they were stopped midway, taken into custody by the police and released on Saturday.

projects, and if I wanted to do politics I would have distributed all the money among the farmers. But, I chose to spend them on irrigation projects so that even their next generation will benefit," he added.

Slamming the previous governments, Mr. Modi said they had little concern for the farmers and the "delay in completion of the Mandal Dam was proof of that". The work in Barwadih block began in 1972, but was stalled since 1993. "In these 25 years, the cost rose from ₹30 crore to ₹2,400 crore... isn't it criminal lethargy?"