

₹500 a month for farmers may be raised, says Jaitley

NEWYORK, FEBRUARY 3

Union Minister Arun Jaitley on Sunday hinted that the Rs 500 a month cash dole to small farmers may be increased in the future as the government's resources grow and said states can top up this amount with their own income support schemes.

He slammed Congress president Rahul Gandhi for ridiculing the scheme announced in the Interim Budget for 2019-20 by equating it to Rs 17 a day dole, saying the Opposition leader must "grow up" and realise that he is contesting a national election and not a college union poll. The plan to give Rs 6,000 cash to 12 crore small and marginal farmers every year together with government schemes for giving them a house, subsidised food, free healthcare and hospitalisation, free sanitation, electricity, roads, gas connections, twice the amount of credit at very cheap rate are all aimed at addressing farm distress, Jaitley said.

"This is the first year where it (farmer income support scheme) has begun. I am sure as the government resources improve, this can be hiked."

'KHARGE DISSENTS REGULARLY'



Congress leader (Mallikarjun Kharge) dissented when Alok Verma was appointed CBI Director, dissented when Verma was transferred and has now dissented when Rishi Kumar Shukla has been appointed. Only thing constant in selection committee is Kharge dissent. Arun Jaitley, UNION MINISTER

DISBURSEMENT IN FEB ITSELF: SECY

The Centre would start disbursing a substantial amount under the income support scheme for small farmers this month itself as beneficiary data is already in place, Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg said. "It has been decided to implement with effect from December 1, 2018. Allocation of ₹20,000 crore required for current fiscal has been made in the Budget."

On nearly 15 crore landless farmers being left out of the scheme, he said they have rural job guarantee scheme MNREGA plus other benefits for the rural population. "What is the biggest thing the Congress claims they ever did? (ex-Finance Minister) P Chidambaram announced a Rs 70,000-crore farm loan waiver... (but) actual distributed was only Rs 52,000 crore. (Also) CAG said a large part of that went to traders and businessmen and converted itself into a fraud," he said.

The present government, he

said, is "starting off over and above the lakhs of crores we are putting into rural areas". Jaitley, here for treatment, said state governments too have responsibility to address farm distress by bringing own income support schemes.

On Chidambaram's criticism that the Interim Budget was an "account for vote" and not a 'Vote on Account', he said, "I have no problem with monies being spent on either of these two accounts. But I have a serious problem when monies go into personal accounts." — PTI