

Greenpeace rally expected to spice up BRAI debate

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Opposing the BRAI bill, Green peace has alleged that it provides for a single window easy approval mechanism to controversial GM crops. The organization known to be a fierce critic of GM crops along with GM free coalition, has organized a maha rally at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, today on June 25, 2013.

What makes it different this time is the involvement of persons from political parties. Mr Balbir Punj of Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Arvind Kejriwal from Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Nikhil Dey from Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangathan, Rakesh Tikait and Yudhvir Singh of Bhartiya Kisan Union too are expected to join the rally along with many others. Mr Devinder Sharma, Food and Trade Policy analyst, too will join the rally, urging the government to withdraw the controversial Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill. The rally will witness the presence of eminent personalities from different parts of India.

As per Greenpeace statement, "The BRAI Bill, 2013 in its current form can be clearly seen as a mechanism to give multi-national biotech giants like Monsanto a free hand to control our food and farming. It is a dangerous recipe for corruption in the country that will lower the bar of approval of risky GM crops. The BRAI Bill needs to be withdrawn. We need a biosafety protection regime which was also recommended by the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture."

This protest is expected to spice up the entire debate and increase pressure on the government which has sent it the parliamentary panel for a review. Meanwhile in parallel to that, the Supreme Court too will hear the ongoing case on GM crops in the first week of July. The same is also a testing ground for the fate of the field trials and regulations of such crops, as the judgement can be a landmark one.

The senior officials of the government however contest the claims of those opposing the BRAI bill. They say that the transgenic crops is only one segment that the bill seeks to regulate.

Even the industry feels that the proposed regulator was important to help the biosciences area that includes key to treatment of various ailments through stem cell therapies, artificial organ transplant and animal organ transplant. Many also argue that the current regulatory mechanism is ill equipped to handle complex biology.