

## Dharia in ICU on day two of hunger strike

Octogenarian freedom fighter and former minister Mohan Dharia was admitted to the intensive care unit of a hospital here Wednesday evening after his health deteriorated on the second day of his hunger strike here to demand a loan waiver for farmers.

Dharia's blood pressure was fluctuating and the blood supply to his heart had considerably decreased, cardiologist Jagdish Hiermath told reporters after the leader was shifted to the Poona Hospital.

Dharia's kidneys also started malfunctioning and he vomited twice during the day, the social activist's personal physician Vinod Shah told reporters.

The widely respected leader had Tuesday begun the hunger strike at the office of environmental NGO Vanarai he heads to demand a loan waiver for distressed farmers whose crops have failed, forcing many of them to commit suicide.

As Dharia's health worsened, a team of government doctors camping at Vanarai told District Collector Prabhakar Deshmukh that the ailing leader would have to be hospitalised immediately.

The fasting leader agreed to being shifted to hospital only when the collector assured him on behalf of Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh that he was not being arrested and, as such, would not be forced to break his fast.

Earlier in the day, Dharia handed over a letter addressed to the chief minister thanking him for taking cognisance of the fast but clarifying that he wouldn't give it up unless the demands were accepted.

In a significant development during the day, Communist Party of India-Marxist politburo member Sitaram Yechury announced his party's support to Dharia's agitation.

Expressing solidarity with Dharia's hunger strike, Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti leader Kishore Tiwari said a road blockade would be launched from Thursday to press the farmers' demands.

( © IANS / India eNews)