

Jitendra Holds Public Durbar At Basantgarh, Several Issues Resolved On Spot



BASANTGARH (UDHAMPUR), OCT 18: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today held a Public Durbar at Basantgarh in Udhampur district, along with senior officers of the district administration and various departments, to listen to public grievances and take up key developmental issues concerning the region.

During the Public Durbar, several issues were resolved on the spot. The Minister engaged with local residents and public representatives on matters concerning the area

and the development requirements of the region. The interaction provided an opportunity to bring local issues to the attention of the concerned authorities and discuss matters relating to public amenities and infrastructure development.

A key development work identified for the area is the construction of a public shed at Chandi Mata, Kalyal, in Panchayat Balota Upper, Block Dudu-Basantgarh, at a total cost of ₹32 lakh. The project is to be financed through contributions from two funding sources, with ₹16 lakh under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) and the remaining ₹16 lakh under the Constituency Development Fund

(CDF).

The proposed public shed represents a development intervention aimed at providing a dedicated public facility at Chandi Mata, Kalyal. With the combined contribution of ₹32 lakh through MPLAD and CDF, the project brings together resources from both funding streams for the identified infrastructure work in the Basantgarh region.

The development work at Panchayat Balota Upper is among the specific local infrastructure details available for inclusion in the context of the Public Durbar. The project's location in Block Dudu-Basantgarh and its defined funding structure provide a concrete account of the development work associated with the area.

Ceremonial Bench held at Leh to Mark Historic Inauguration of Ladakh Bench of HC of J&K & Ladakh

LEH, OCTOBER 18: A Ceremonial Bench of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, presided over by Dr. Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati, Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, was held at Leh today to commemorate the historic inauguration of the Ladakh Bench, marking a significant milestone in bringing constitutional justice closer to the people of the Union Territory.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Justice Sindhu Sharma, Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Justice Sanjay Dhar, Justice Mohd. Akram Chowdhary, Justice Rahul Bharti, Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi, Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal, Justice Rajesh Sekhri, Justice Mohd. Yousuf Wani, Justice Sanjay Parihar, Justice Shahzad Azeem and Justice Yash Paul Bournay, Judges of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, also graced the Bench.

Addressing the Ceremonial Bench, Vishal Sharma, Deputy Solicitor General of India, Jammu Wing, described the establishment of the Ladakh Bench as a reaffirmation of the constitutional promise of accessible justice, strengthening the rule of law and bringing constitutional remedies closer to the people.

Tahir Majid Shamsi, Deputy Solicitor General of India, Srinagar Wing, traced the evolution of judicial institutions in Ladakh since 2019 and observed that regular judicial sittings, digital facilities and legal aid would substantially alleviate the hardships faced by litigants.

Advocate Gonbo Stobgyal, President, Bar Association, Leh, termed the occa-



sion the fulfilment of a long-cherished aspiration of the people of Ladakh and assured the fullest cooperation of the Bar in the effective administration of justice.

Advocate Reyaz Ahmad Khan, President, Bar Association, Kargil, described the establishment of the Bench as a historic milestone and acknowledged the sustained efforts of the judicial leadership in bringing justice closer to the people.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati, Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, described the establishment of the Ladakh Bench as the realization of a decades-long aspiration for accessible, inclusive and equitable justice.

Chief Justice observed that the people of Ladakh had long endured difficult terrain, harsh climatic conditions and substantial travel expenses to pursue their cases at Srinagar and Jammu. The establishment of a permanent Bench would ensure that geographical isolation no longer translated into judicial exclusion.

Chief Justice expressed profound gratitude to the Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, for his vi-

sionary leadership and acknowledged the collective efforts of the Union Government, the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Union Territory Administration in translating this historic initiative into reality within a short span.

Chief Justice emphasized the responsibility of the Bench and the Bar to uphold constitutional values, safeguard the rights of vulnerable sections and preserve Ladakh's fragile environment. Expressing optimism about the future, His Lordship envisioned the Ladakh Bench as a beacon of fairness, truth and timely justice for generations to come.

On the occasion, the Full Court adopted a resolution emphasizing the need to promote access to education and provide safe, accessible and affordable residential facilities for girl students in Ladakh, particularly those belonging to remote and far-flung areas. Recognizing the challenges of geographical remoteness, long travel distances and inadequate accommodation, the Full Court called for enhanced legal awareness and coordinated efforts among educational institutions, legal services authorities and other stakeholders to ensure equal educational opportunities. The resolution also

requested the Regular Bench to take further action in the matter.

The occasion was also graced by the presence of the spouses of the Judges of the High Court. Aishwarya Bhati and Archana Pathak Dave, Additional Solicitors General of India, were also present.

Officers of the Registry of the High Court, including Haq Nawaz Zargar, Principal Secretary to Chief Justice; Rajeev Gupta, Registrar Vigilance; Umesh Sharma, Registrar Information Technology; Faizan-i-Nazar, Central Project Coordinator, eCourts and Chemit Yurgal, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Kargil, who has been entrusted with overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the Registry of the Ladakh Bench, also attended the proceedings.

Jatinder Jamwal, Law Secretary, UT of Ladakh; Spalzes Angmo, Principal District and Sessions Judge, Leh and Sheikh Gowhar Hussain, Principal District and Sessions Judge, Kargil, along with their respective teams of Judicial Officers, were also present.

The proceedings of the Ceremonial Bench were conducted by M.K. Sharma, Registrar General of the High Court.

Devotees throng Durga temples across Kathmandu on Maha Ashtami

KATHMANDU, Oct 18: Devotees thronged temples dedicated to Goddess Durga across Kathmandu Valley on Sunday to offer prayers on Maha Ashtami, the eighth day of Nepal's 10-day Bada Dashain festival.

Maha Ashtami holds special religious significance for Nepal's Hindu community, who worship the goddess in her forms of Mahakali, Mahalaxmi and Mahasaraswati, associated with power, wealth and knowledge.

Bada Dashain, Nepal's biggest Hindu festival, is marked by family reunions, prayers and rituals. The nine forms of Goddess Durga, collectively known as Nawadurga, are worshipped during Navaratri. The celebrations culminate on Vijaya Dashami, the tenth day, when elders apply tika -- a mixture of vermilion powder, curd and rice -- and give jamara, or barley shoots, to younger family members as blessings.

Large crowds gathered on Sunday at temples across Kathmandu, including Guheshwori, Naxal Bhagawati, Bhadrakali, Shova



Bhagawati, Bijeshwori, In-drayani, Raktakali, Bajrayogini and Taleju Bhawani. The shrines were decorated with colourful lights and paper flags for the festival.

Devotees offered prayers and performed rituals at homes and temples, including at the Hanumandhoka Durbar Square, while animal sacrifices were conducted at several shrines as part of traditional observances.

The recitation of the Durga Saptashati, a sacred

text associated with the Markandeya Purana, is another important ritual performed on the occasion.

On Saturday, Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah and President Ramchandra Paudel extended Dashain greetings, stressing the festival's role in strengthening family bonds, social harmony and national unity.

Paudel said the festival helped foster goodwill and fraternity among Nepal's diverse ethnic, religious and

cultural communities, while Shah highlighted its importance in preserving the country's traditions and bringing Nepalis together.

This year's celebrations come as Nepal continues to mourn the victims of the August 26 Bhotekoshi flash floods that killed over 1,400 people.

Shah expressed condolences to bereaved families and said the government was working to rehabilitate those displaced by the disaster. (PTI)

Education System Now An Exclusion System Designed To Keep Millions Of Youth Out: Rahul

NEW DELHI, OCT 18: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said what is prevailing in the country is not an education system but an "exclusion system" that is designed to keep millions of Indian youth out.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha's remarks came in an Instagram post with a video of his recent interaction with a group of students. "If you don't have money, power, or don't speak English, the system will push you out without a second thought," Gandhi said. "You can't call this an education system. It's an exclusion system - designed to keep millions of Indian



youth out," Gandhi said. Besides holding interactions with students here,

Gandhi is also engaging with students on a large scale through his 'Chhatron

Ki Goonj' initiative.

Earlier this month, during his Chhatron Ki Goonj event in Chennai, Gandhi had launched a no-holds-barred attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling him "Mogambo Modi".

The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha also told the students of the country that they have "nothing to fear, we are with you, and together, we are going to demolish Modi".

He had made the remarks at the sixth edition of Chhatron Ki Goonj, which was the first in South India.

Before Chennai, Chhatron ki Goonj was held in Kota, Dehradun, Prayagraj, Pune and Indore. (PTI)

Kavinder calls for preservation, promotion of Dogri language

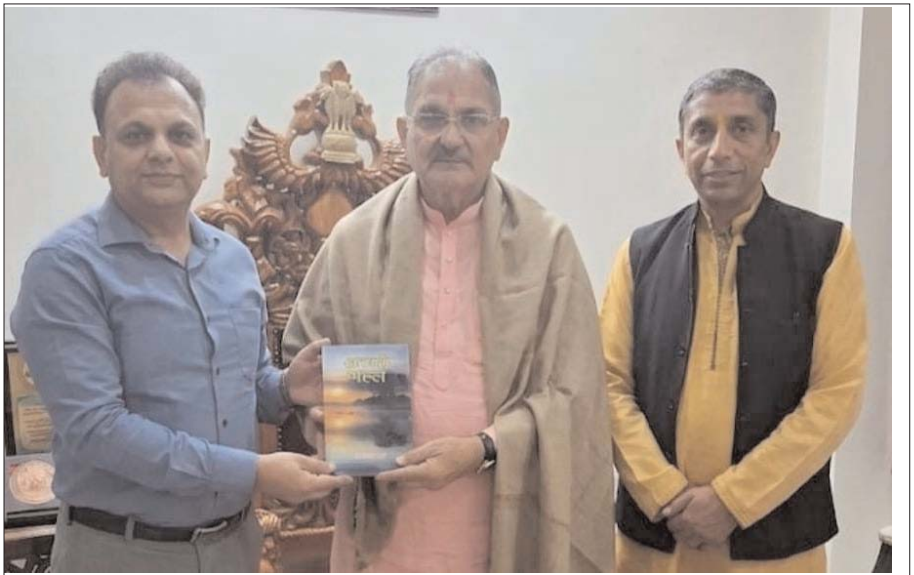
HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, OCT 18

Himachal Pradesh Governor Kavinder Gupta today emphasised the need for the preservation and promotion of Dogri language.

"Dogri language represents the region's rich cultural identity and heritage," he said after he was presented a Dogri book here.

The governor emphasised the need for writers and scholars to continue their efforts towards preserving, promoting and enriching Dogri for future generations.

The book also carries a special message by the governor in its foreword.



He congratulated the author and wished him success in his literary endeavours.

The book – Apni Gali –

was presented to him by its author Deepak Byotra during a courtesy meeting.

The governor appreciated Byotra's contribution

to Dogri literature.

Byotra apprised him of the book's content, which reflects everyday realities and social issues.

India Bars Sugar-Based Ethanol In 2026-27 Tender, Cuts Maize Incentive

NEW DELHI, OCT 18: State-run oil marketing companies have barred ethanol made from sugarcane juice, sugar syrup and B-heavy molasses from their latest procurement tender for the 2026-27 supply year for blending in petrol, as the government seeks to protect domestic sugar supplies while sustaining its nationwide petrol-blending programme.

The tender, issued on October 16 by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) on behalf of oil marketing companies (OMCs), seeks bids for around 11 billion litres of ethanol for the supply year beginning November to meet the requirement of doping 20 per cent ethanol in petrol. It also cuts the incentive for maize-based ethanol, lowering the procurement price to Rs 68.86 per litre from Rs 71.86.

"The Government of India has issued directions that sugar diversion for ethanol be reduced to zero for ethanol supply year 2026-27," the tender document said.

"No offers have been sought for ethanol produced from sugarcane juice, sugar or sugar syrup and B-heavy molasses in this quantity bid tender," it added.

The restrictions mark a shift in feedstock sourcing for the ethanol-blended petrol programme, which has relied on both grain-based and sugarcane-based ethanol to reduce crude oil imports and cut vehicle emissions.

The tender allows bids for ethanol produced from maize, broken rice, surplus rice procured by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and C-heavy molasses, according to the document.

The reduction in the maize incentive to Rs 2.79 per litre from Rs 5.79 is expected to lower returns for producers supplying ethanol from the grain, even as the exclusion of sugar-based feedstocks increases the importance of alternative raw materials.

The move comes amid concerns over domestic sugar availability and rising prices after poor rainfall in key sugar-producing states, including Maharashtra and Karnataka, raised the risk of lower output.

India, the world's largest sugar consumer, has increasingly used ethanol blending to reduce its dependence on imported crude oil. However, diverting sugarcane and sugar for fuel production can compete with supplies available for food consumption, particularly when output is constrained.

The latest tender underscores the government's effort to balance its energy-security objectives with the need to maintain adequate

sugar supplies and contain domestic prices.

India has adopted petrol containing up to 20 per cent ethanol, known as E20, as the nationwide standard as part of efforts to reduce oil import dependence and emissions.

Ethanol is produced from agricultural feedstocks, including sugarcane and grains, and blended with petrol to displace a portion of fossil fuel consumption. The programme has created a substantial market for domestic distilleries while offering farmers an additional source of demand for agricultural produce.

The shift away from sugar-based ethanol in the 2026-27 procurement cycle is likely to increase the importance of grain-based production and make feedstock availability, procurement prices and distillery capacity key factors in meeting blending requirements.