

## Dy CM visits Katra; assesses issues, concerns of local residents

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS  
JAMMU, DEC 29

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Kumar Choudhary, today visited Katra to assess and address the issues and concerns of local residents.

During the visit, several delegations called on the Dy CM and apprised him of their grievances and demands as well seeking prompt redressal of the same.

The Dy CM also visited Shalimar Park and Katra Bus Stand and took stock of facilities there.

While interacting with the deputations, the



Deputy Chief Minister said the government stands firmly with the people and is fully committed to their welfare and development.

The Dy CM assured the people that their grievances and demands will be

looked into on priority for redressal.

Acknowledging the importance of addressing public grievances, he assured the delegations of the government's commitment towards welfare of the people.

"The government remains committed towards upholding the rights of every individual while ensuring no one is deprived of the benefits of schemes being implemented by the UT administration, maintained the Dy CM."

## DC Bandipora reviews snow clearance, restoration of essential services

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Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, today chaired a meeting to review and assess the ongoing efforts in snow clearance and the restoration of essential services across the district, following the recent snowfall.

The meeting was attended by Executive Engineers of PMGSY/ R&B, PHE, along with Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs), Chief Executive Officer MCB, besides officers from Mechanical Engineering Department, PDD and other concerned departments.

Senior officers from the Gurez and Sumbal sub-di-



visions joined the meeting virtually.

During the meeting, DC assessed the progress of snow clearance operations and discuss strategies for

the prompt restoration of power and water supply across the district.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner M.A. Qadri emphasised

coordinated among concerned departments and stressed to ensure a smooth and effective response to the ongoing weather conditions.

M.A. Qadri emphasized the need for close monitoring of snow clearance operations, urging all departments to work efficiently and ensure the timely restoration of vital services.

He also directed the concerned departments to remain alert and prepared for any further disruptions caused by additional snowfall in the coming days.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated the district administration's commitment to resolving public issues swiftly and ensuring minimal inconvenience to the residents.

## Rajasthan can benefit from creation of additional districts: Ashok Gehlot

JAIPUR, DEC 29: Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday said the state can benefit from creation of additional districts.

His statement came a day after the BJP-led state government dissolved nine of the 17 new districts that Gehlot had established during his tenure in August last year.

"Rajasthan has the potential to have more districts. For example, Madhya Pradesh, though smaller, has 53 districts, while Rajasthan now has only 41 now," Gehlot told reporters during a press conference.

The senior Congress leader explained that smaller districts help streamline the local administration.

"When district headquarters are 100-150 kilometers away, it becomes



difficult for people to approach officials. Even justice for serious crimes gets delayed. If creating new districts was such a bad decision, why did they take an entire year to review it?" he asked.

Taking potshots at the BJP, Gehlot alleged that its ministers were avoiding comments on the issue

due to a "guilty conscience". Lalit Panwar, the officer who reviewed the districts, later joined the BJP, suggesting political motive behind the decision, he pointed out.

"Many bureaucrats are now claiming that the new districts were impractical, but the BJP is using them as a shield to attack us

knowing that the decision was right," Gehlot said.

The former chief minister rubbished allegations that the new districts were announced for political gains ahead of the elections.

"We worked on this plan from the start, setting up revenue units over four years before announcing the districts. The decision was necessary," he said.

Meanwhile, the BJP countered Gehlot's remarks.

"If the intention to create new districts was genuine, why wasn't it announced in earlier budgets? This was clearly a pre-election move. There's no guilt in our cabinet, as Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel himself announced the annulment," said BJP spokesperson Laxmikant Bharadwaj.

## GCW Parade hosts 2-day lecture series on 'Introduction to Capital Market: Role of SEBI'

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JAMMU, DEC 29

Government College for Women (GCW), Parade Jammu, successfully concluded a two-day lecture series on the theme "Introduction to Capital Market: Role of SEBI (Securities Exchange Board of India)" on December 27 and 28, 2024.

The event, organized by the Training and Placement Cell in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, was held under the guidance of the college Principal, Dr. Ravender Tickoo, and aimed to enhance financial literacy among students.

The program began with a welcome address by Ms. Sonia Bhau, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce. The keynote speaker for the event was Mr. Bilal Ahmad Hakeem, a seasoned trainer from NISM SEBI, who provided deep insights into the functioning of the securities



market. The lectures covered a wide range of topics, including an introduction to the securities market, how to invest wisely, selecting the best securities, the role of depositories like NSDL, and the services offered by depository participants. Other key areas of focus included anti-money laundering measures, the creation and use of Demat accounts, and utilizing resources available on SEBI's investor website.

Over 120 students actively participated in the sessions, which combined theoretical knowledge with practical applications. A

brainstorming session allowed students to engage with the concepts more deeply, enhancing their understanding and encouraging critical thinking. The event emphasized the importance of financial literacy in today's economy and empowered students with knowledge that would benefit their academic and professional growth.

The lecture series concluded with a vote of thanks presented by Dr. Renu Bala, Assistant Professor, Commerce, who highlighted the significance of such initiatives in fostering confidence and career-

oriented skills among students. The students appreciated the practical approach adopted during the sessions and recognized the value of participating in programs beyond classroom learning.

The efforts of the Faculty of Commerce and the Training and Placement Cell, including Dr. Sunita Raina (HOD), Ms. Sonia Bhau, Ms. Sukhvinder Kaur, Dr. Renu Bala, Dr. Vishal Gupta, Dr. Rachna Chanyal, Dr. Aijaz Maqbool Malik, Dr. Attaullah Niazi, and Ms. Anu Chadda, were instrumental in the event's success. A certificate of appreciation was presented to Mr. Bilal Ahmad Hakeem in recognition of his invaluable contribution.

This initiative reflects GCW Parade Jammu's commitment to providing students with opportunities to broaden their horizons, equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to excel in the dynamic world of finance and capital markets.

## Panel flags low NREGA wages, calls for revised payment systems to address worker issues

NEW DELHI, DEC 29:

A parliamentary panel has expressed concern over the low wage rate under the MGNREGA and recommended a change in the revision formula by linking it to a price index commensurate with the rate of inflation.

In its recent report on the MGNREGA wage rate, the parliamentary standing committee on rural development headed by Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka has also recommended increasing the permissible days of work per rural family from 100 to 150 every year.

From the inception of the scheme in 2006 till 2010-11, the wage rate was determined on the basis of the minimum wage set by the state governments. From 2011-12, the central government started determining the wage rates using the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL), which gave greater weightage to food items.

A committee under economist Mahendra Dev in 2015 and another under then senior rural development ministry official Nagesh Singh in 2018 had suggested that the Consumer Price Index for Rural (CPI-Rural) might be the appropriate index for protecting wages against inflation as it gave a more balanced weightage to expenses on food and other services.

A separate committee headed by labour econo-



mist Anoop Satpathy had in 2018 recommended that the minimum wage per day for any work be fixed at based on the July 2018 price index.

The parliamentary panel has also flagged nominal wages and delayed payment under the MGNREGA as a reason behind the migration of workers.

"The committee has time and again urged the DoRD (department of rural development) to increase the wage rates under the MGNREGA by linking it with an index commensurate with national inflation. But the wage rates under the MGNREGA continue to remain stagnant on account of no change in indexation. Thus, the committee once again makes a strong appeal to the DoRD to review its stand and bring on board all the stakeholders to increase

the wage rates at the earliest... across all the states/UTs," the parliamentary panel said in its report filed in the Lok Sabha earlier this month.

The panel had earlier endorsed demands from civil society groups to increase the permissible days for work under the MGNREGA from 100 to 150 per family per year. The DoRD had then informed the panel that the state governments were allowed to make provision for additional days of employment beyond the guaranteed period from their own funds.

"The committee finds the reply routine and generic in nature, merely highlighting the formulated provisions of the Act. Although the state governments may make provisions for additional days, still the committee is of the firm opinion

that the mandatory increase in the number of guaranteed days should be brought about by the DoRD by moving an amendment in the Act to make it applicable for the entire country," it said.

The panel also recommended that the rural development ministry's Aadhaar-based Payment Bridge System (ABPS) for making payments under the MGNREGA and the National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) to register the attendance of workers should not be made mandatory and an alternative mechanism devised.

Civil society groups have claimed that a sizable section of workers was yet to comply with the ABPS while poor Internet connectivity affected the registration of attendance under the NMMS.

## Akhilesh pitches for ballot voting, says EVMs not trustworthy

NEW DELHI, DEC 29: Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav has called for elections to be conducted using ballot papers, citing a lack of trust in electronic voting machines (EVMs).

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said this at a press conference at the SP headquarters here on Sunday, alongside Rahul Kumar Kamboj, an Indian-origin member of Parliament in Germany.

"Even a country like Germany conducts elections using ballot papers. But in India, elections are conducted with EVMs to serve vested interests," Yadav said.

Emphasising the need for elections that inspire confidence, he said, "No one trusts EVMs. Even the faces of those who win elections seem dejected as they too do not have faith in the system." At the press conference, Kamboj highlighted the benefits of Germany's ballot-paper voting system. "In Germany, voting is still conducted using ballot papers. It is an

important system because any discrepancies can be addressed with a recount," he explained.

Reflecting on his visit to Lucknow and his longstanding relationship with Yadav, Kamboj said, "My efforts are focused on fostering a collaboration between Indian-origin individuals and Germany, so that the qualities of both countries can come together. We aim to facilitate cultural exchanges and I invite everyone to participate in the upcoming cultural festivals in Germany. Visa issues will no longer be a hurdle," he said.

Kamboj also spoke of building a bridge between opportunities in Europe and their implementation in India, specifically in Uttar Pradesh. "If we can identify the opportunities available in Germany and Europe, and bring them to places like Lucknow, it will open new avenues. That is my mission," he added.

Welcoming Kamboj, Yadav expressed enthusiasm for strengthening ties. "Your visit has created an op-

portunity to deepen the relationship between our regions, which will benefit the people of this state and country," he said.

Highlighting the need for a stronger future for the next generation, Yadav said, "Our youngsters need better education, training and skills to secure good jobs. Building bridges between opportunities will open pathways to progress." Sharing a personal anecdote, Yadav recounted his government trip to Germany. "I remember visiting Frankfurt and deciding to travel to Hannover by road. The roads in Germany are among the best and that inspired me to replicate them in Uttar Pradesh. Today, when people drive on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, they feel that it is one of the best roads in the world," he said.

Yadav reiterated his commitment to creating opportunities for the younger generation while strengthening ties between India and Germany.

## Effigies, roadblocks, and resignations: Rajasthan erupts in protests after BJP dissolves nine districts

RAJASTHAN, DEC 29: Protests broke out on Sunday in the nine Rajasthan districts abolished by the state's BJP government.

The state government on Saturday decided to dissolve nine of the 17 districts created by the previous Congress dispensation, saying they were neither practical nor in public interest.

Three new divisions were also dissolved in a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma. The state will now only have seven divisions and 41 districts.

Following the decision to abolish the Anupgarh district, local BJP leaders submitted their resignations.

On Sunday, the Bikaner-Sriganganagar national



highway was blocked while protests were also held in the just-abolished Neem Ka Thana district.

Avinash Sharma of the Shahpura District Bachao Sangharsh Samiti said it was unanimously decided in a meeting that an effigy of Sharma would be burnt at the Trimurti Memorial on Monday.

After this, a memorandum will be submitted to the district collector, he said. In Neem Ka Thana, tyres were burnt and slogans raised against the district's abolition during a public meeting at Ramliha Maidan.

Neem Ka Thana Congress MLA Suresh Modi told reporters that the Vya-

par Mahasangh held a meeting and decided to shut the market indefinitely from Monday.

The Sabzi Mandi Association also took a similar decision, he said.

In Sanchore district, former minister Sukhram Bishnoi announced protests from Monday.

In Anupgarh, Jila Banao Sangharsh Samiti general secretary Jarnail Singh held a meeting of various organisations to decide strategy.

Farmer leader Sunil Godara said they blocked National Highway 911 as a mark of protest.

The nine districts abolished are Anupgarh, Dudu, Gangapur City, Jaipur Rural, Jodhpur Rural, Kekri, Neem Ka Thana, Sanchore and Shahpura.