

Clippings :

'Protest Calendar for 2023-24 Ready to Press for Statehood for Ladakh'

Hundreds of Ladakh residents gathered in Delhi on Wednesday to demand Statehood and constitutional safeguards for the Union Territory.

The representatives from both Kargil and Leh asserted that when Sikkim with a population of only 2.5 lakh could be granted Statehood, the same could be done for Ladakh which has a population of around 3 lakh (as per 2011 Census). Rejecting the high-powered committee (HPC) constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on January 2, the speakers – including members of Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance – said that any dialogue would henceforth be held directly with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Thupstan Chhewang, former BJP MP from Ladakh, said that not a single job had been given to locals since Ladakh became a Union Territory. If their demands were not met, they would intensify the protest, he said, adding that the protest calendar for 2023-24 were ready.

Mr. Chhewang added that the committee led by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai did not have any real power and it did not acknowledge any of their demands.

The gathering brought forth people from all walks of life. Lobsang Shirap (88), a farmer from Nubra, said that he was there to fight for the future generation. "There are no jobs and no teachers in schools. I am here to extend support to the youth," he said.

Tsewang Dolma (80) from Henaskot in West Ladakh listened in rapt attention to the speakers on stage as she joined others in raising slogans in support of the Sixth Schedule.

Education reformer Sonam Wangchuk received a rousing welcome as he took the stage. "Ladakh is ecologically sensitive. We were expecting U.T. with a legislature but got one without legislature, we thought it may be on the way. We made the BJP win but gradually they stopped talking about Sixth Schedule," he pointed out.