

## Visit to Leh and Kargil in Ladakh District

Smt. Spalzes Angmo, Member, National Commission for Minorities and Smt. Esther Kar, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities proceeded on tour to Leh and Kargil from 4.10.2011 to 21.10.2011 and 16.10.2011 to 21.10.2011 respectively.

2. The Member held meetings in Leh with the women's group (mahila mandals) involved in various social welfare activities on 8.10.2011. The Member also visited the Leh Chokhang monastery and Shey Palace on 10.10.2011 and 11.10.2011 which was followed by meetings with Buddhist communities at Chemrey and Sakti monasteries and Buddhist representatives in Leh relating to the problems. Issues of security were discussed with the Army Corps Commander in Leh on 13.10.2011.

3. On 17.10.2011, Smt. Spalzes Angmo, Member, NCM and Smt. Esther Kar, JS, NCM proceeded on tour to Kargil, a distance of around 225 kms. from Leh by road. En route, the Commission delegation stopped at Wakha and Mulbekh Chamba for a meeting with the district officials.

### 4. MEETINGS IN WAKHA AND MULBEKH

4.1 The local community in Wakha and Mulbekh Chamba brought up the following points:-

4.1.1 Non-availability of a girls' higher secondary school in Mulbekh -

In the absence of a girls' higher secondary school, parents are reluctant to send their children to co-educational schools. The only girls' higher secondary school is in Kargil which is more than an hour's travel from Mulbekh. During the winter months, the distance is too far and even the public transport is very undependable as the area is snow bound.

4.1.2 Lack of school buses for the schools in Wakha and Mulbekh -

There was a demand from the locals in Shargole block for school buses to Wakha and Mulbekh for the children. The parents were willing to pay the bus charge

4.1.3 The Buddhist people of Shargole block where the Buddhists are in large majority represented that there is inadequate representation of Buddhist employees in most of the offices in the district. They also brought to the notice of the Commission that the number of Bodhi teachers is very few numbering only 4 to 5 although there are 10 high schools and 35 middle schools in the Buddhist populated areas of Kargil.

4.1.4 They also represented that the economic and social conditions of Buddhists in Kargil district is deplorable. The demands of the Buddhist community included (i) Anti Conversion Law, (ii) Minority Property Safety Act and (iii) Allotment of land for Sarai in Kargil and cremation ground and creation of Bodhi teachers post in Kargil.

4.1.5. The Buddhist population in Mulbekh and Wakha and Phokar community in Shargole block apprised the Member about how the Buddhist population has been split between different Panchayats in the recent delimitation of the constituencies under the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council.

4.1.6 There are nine houses in Karamba but they are distributed over 3 panchayats. They represented that:-

- (a) Most of the minority populations are located in Shargole Block and voter population are 3000, but the previous constituency demarcation in LAHDC Kargil has been designed and sanctioned in such a broken/irregular way that they would never have chance to get a councilor's seat.
- (b) The geographical location of Zanskar Sub Division being far away from the other Buddhist village of Kargil district, the councilor of Zanskar was not able to reflect their genuine demands neither are able to visit their villages, as they themselves have a scattered huge area and they are hardly able to cover their own villages.
- (c) The main shops of the Buddhist community were totally looted and burnt down by some fundamentalists. At that time, the victims requested the NCM also, but no kind of relief has been provided so far to them. On the other side in Leh, relief was

provided to the minority. They are surprised that two type of rules in two districts of the same State prevails.

4.1.7 During the meeting in Mulbekh and Phokar, the Phokar community thanked the Commission for defusing the communal tension which was building up in Phokar due to the use of the ground surrounding the Buddhist monastery for the Moharram procession. The problem was resolved with the help of the district administration who have allotted an alternative site further down for community usage after the matter was taken up by Smt. Spalzes Angmo, Member, NCM with the district administration last year.

4.1.8 The Phokar Buddhist community requested the Member to urge the district administration to fence the area around the Monastery to ensure better security.

4.1.9 Development of Phokar Rzung is one of the famous sacred Buddhist places and caves of Guru Rimpochey exist in Rzung. They also represented for due and equitable development in Buddhist areas of Phokar, Sapi, Shargole, Mulbekh, Wakha, Bodh kharbu, Hemiskote and Daichil.

5 Accommodation for Buddhist employees in Kargil – There are more than 200 Buddhist employees in Kargil who find it difficult to find private housing. The employees need a government housing colony

5.1 Issues relating to Kargil Town – The Member met Buddhist representatives in Kargil who raised the following issues :-

- (i) The Buddhist community in Kargil (200 employees plus visitors from Rangdum, Zanskar areas and Mulbekh Wakha) have no prayer room, cremation ground and serai in the District headquarters.
- (ii) Minority Property Safety Act Bill : Whenever any accident takes place in the region, state or centre, the Buddhist community is targeted. Keeping the fact in view, the Bill of Minority Safety Act needs to be passed in J&K.

## 6 Meetings on 19.10.2011

- 6.1 Land Allotment to Buddhist community - At Kurbathang Kargil, there is a demand to shift the Army from Kurbathang so that new Kargil town can be established. The Buddhist community has represented that in such a scenario, the first right should be for allotment of land to the Buddhist community for construction of the Buddhist Gonpa and Serai in the new town.
- 6.2 Walling, fencing for the ruined Buddhist buildings – There is an old damaged building consisting of four rooms constructed some 42 years ago by the Buddhist community. At present, the building is under the control of the Government and the Buddhist community has not been given the authority for repairs inspite of several representations. Administration may allow fencing, walling to ensure proper security so that Buddhists can use it as a monastery. The Buddhist community also represented that there was no Serai for Buddhists to stay when they visit Kargil.

- 6.3 Meeting in Kargil with Ladakh Hill Development Council (LAHDC) – The NCM delegation had a meeting under the Chairmanship of the Chairman and Executive Members of the LAHDC, district officials to review the 15 Point Programme. The LAHDC did not have much knowledge about 15% earmarking of the funds under different programmes for the benefit of minority communities in Jammu and Kashmir. During the meeting, the officials submitted that in NREGA, out of a total beneficiaries of 13,711, 3163 were minorities beneficiaries. Similarly, under Indira Awas Yojana, out of 1690; around 245 were minorities. Under ICDS, during the winter months, there is no work undertaken under NREGA. Under ICDS during winter months, dry nutrition is given as the children are unable to come to the ICDS centre.
- 6.4 Bhoti language is taught as an optional language in Wakha and Ranghdum. The NCM was also informed that there is a special cell set up in the Kashmir University for overseeing the distribution of scholarships to the tribals.
- 6.5 As regard recruitment of teachers done by District Recruitment Board, it was clarified that 74 teachers were recruited in Kargil district, out of which 10 were Buddhists. In Zanskar, out of 60 policemen recruited recently, 14 were from minorities. For the recruitment of police to the whole State, the State Recruitment Board is incharge. The DSP clarified that there were no communal incidents in the district in the last one year.

- 6.6 The issue related to tension in and around Rangdum Monastery was raised by the Member in LAHDC and it was clarified by the Chairman of the LAHDC that the whole issue was sub-judice in the Court. The police, however, assured the migrants Bakharwalas do not cross the Shafat Nalla as required under the High Court order.
- 7 On 19.10.2011, the Member and the JS returned to Leh with a brief stop over in the Lamayuru and Alchi monasteries enroute where the Member met the representatives of the Buddhist communities.
- 8 On 20.10.2011- Meeting in Leh - The Member took a review meeting in Leh regarding the 15 Point Programme. During the meeting, it was clarified to the officials of the district that the remaining funds under MSDP have not been released because of non-utilisation of funds already released to the State Government and non-submission of UC for the amount.
- 8.1 The District Administration explained that due to delay in the tender of Solar Submersible Pumps, the work could not be completed. However, they said that now the tender has been finalized and full utilization for the amount will be submitted by November.
- 8.2 Under ICDS, the coverage was 100% and during the winter months, dry ration has been distributed. The Aanganwadis are closed for two months but the ANM comes to the centre. For water supply, six habitations have been covered and the

remaining habitations would also be covered by the end of the financial year.

8.3 Member also raised the issue of power shortage in Leh. She was told that the project near Alchi was likely to be completed next year. Meanwhile, the State Government was asked about the possibility of making a proposal relating to the solar project in Leh as this area has abundant sunshine even during the winter months. The State Government officials agreed to consider the proposal and keep NCM informed of the same.

8.4 Visit to Central Institute of Buddhist Studies - The Member also had a detailed discussion in the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies regarding deemed university status for the institute. They were informed that the Member had already recommended the deemed university status for the institute and this has been taken up by the Chairman with the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Member agreed to pursue the matter further through the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of HRD so that the University could be granted deemed university status.

## 9 Recommendations

9.1 The Commission may take up the issue of repair of the Buddhist Gonpa in Kargil with the State Government.

9.2 The State Government may be addressed for pro-active steps to solve the electricity shortage in Leh Ladakh so that during the harsh winter months, electricity is available.

- 9.3 The issues relating to recruitment of Buddhists in the district was taken up with the LAHDC who have clarified that adequate steps would be taken to ensure proper representations both in the police and in the administration including the teachers.
- 9.4 Regarding compensation for the communal violence in Badh Karbu, the LAHDC asked the Assistant Commissioner to prepare a fresh paper for the loss of the commercial goods of the tenants in the shops during the communal violence.
- 9.5 The LAHDC also agreed to consider the possibility of setting up a Serai for Buddhists in Kargil District headquarters.
- 9.6 Regarding the school buses, the RTO agreed to provide the buses if the parents are willing to make the payment for the children traveling in the State Transport buses provided exclusively for students.
- 9.7 The matter relating to delimitation of Constituencies and adequate representations of Buddhists in the Panchayats will be taken up by the Member with the J&K Government
- 9.8 Member will pursue with Ministry of Culture through the nodal ministry for grant of deemed university status to Central Institute of Buddhist Studies
- 9.9 There should be a defence/para military unit stationed at Shafat nullah in Rangdum Valley in Kargil.