

PROTESTS IN LEH, KARGIL FOR STATEHOOD, SPECIAL STATUS

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On strike: Groups demanding statehood for Ladakh staging a protest in Kargil on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ladakh's twin districts of Kargil and Leh on Wednesday witnessed street protests to press for demands of statehood and special status under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, as the region completed three years of Union Territory (UT) status this month.

Hundreds of protesters raised slogans such as "Home Minister pay attention, we are not begging" and "Pay attention, we are demanding our rights" and marched on the streets.

In Leh, the street protest was spearheaded by the Apex Body-Leh (ABL), an amalgam of religious and political parties in the district. ABL head Thupstan Chhewang led the rally from the NDS Memorial Sports Ground to Polo Ground. In Kargil, the Kargil Democratic Alliance, an amalgam of religious and political parties, organised street rallies in the town.

"The Government of India should pay heed to our demand to grant statehood. In case statehood is difficult to grant, let Ladakh be a U.T. with a legislature," Mr. Chhewang said.

He said the groups from Leh and Kargil were meeting again to chalk out a timeline for protests if the demands were not met by the Centre.

On January 6, 2021, the Union Home Minister constituted a committee under Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy to have a dialogue with the representatives from Ladakh "to find an appropriate solution to the issues related to language, culture and conservation of land in Ladakh".

The KDA and Apex Body-Leh (ABL) have been jointly fighting for the restoration of statehood and special status on the lines of the rights granted to the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to safeguard local culture, language and demography.

The government on Wednesday issued a notification empowering the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Ladakh to make rules for recruitment to the Public Services Group-A and Group-B Gazetted posts.

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