

Day 2 of Bureaucrats' Mass Protest Leave

Public services hit in Punjab

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

Public services were hit in Punjab and the common man across the state faced massive inconvenience on Tuesday as Punjab Civil Services (PCS) officers, revenue officials and clerical staff of government offices continued to remain on their "protest" mass casual leave for the second consecutive day.

The offices of deputy commissioners, civil secretariats, divisional commissioners and revenue offices wore a deserted look across all districts.

The general public, including senior citizens and those travelling from far off places to district headquarters in the harsh weather conditions, were left high and dry.

The public counters at Ludhiana and Mohali Deputy Commissioners offices wore a deserted look. Notices of strikes could be seen on the walls and windows.

"I have come all the way Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh for a property related case. I was not aware about the strike. I don't know how long will I have to wait now," lamented septuagenarian Satnam Singh Gill.

"This is a clear issue between the govern-

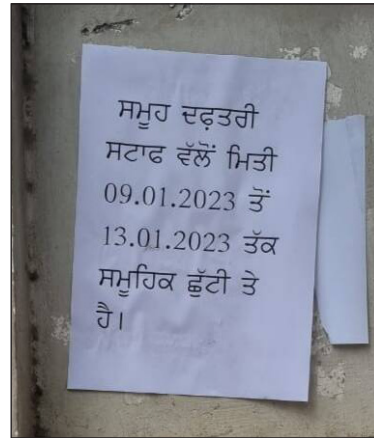


ment and the officers. But who is paying from Dear Bassi to Mohali to collect some **AS MANY AS 235 PCS OFFICERS' ACROSS PUNJAB ARE NOW ON MASS CASUAL LEAVE. THE PCS OFFICER'S ASSOCIATION WILL ANNOUNCE THEIR NEXT COURSE OF ACTION ON JANUARY 14.**

the price for it? The common man, like always. Who allowed these officials to hold the general public to ransom like this? There should be strict action against them. They are public servants not dictators," remarked an agitated Ravinder Sharma, another senior citizen, who had travelled

documents.

It may be recalled that on Monday, the PCS officers went on a five-day mass leave to protest against the arrest of their colleague Narinder Singh Dhaliwal, Secretary, Regional Transport Authority (RTA), Ludhiana. Dhaliwal was arrested by the



state Vigilance Bureau on January 6 in a corruption case.

As many as 235 PCS officers across Punjab are now on mass casual leave. The PCS Officer's Association will announce their next course of action on January 14.

Expressing solidarity with the PCS officers, revenue officers (tehsildars, naib tehsildars and kanugos) and clerical staff of deputy commissioner (DC) offices and divisional commissioner offices have also gone on five-day mass casual leave till January 13. The Excise and Taxation Department staff was also on one-day leave

Tuesday.

On Monday, a delegation of the PCS Officers' Association that held a meeting with Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, had reiterated that its members would not resume work till their demands were met — including immediate release of Dhaliwal, registration of FIR, arrest and suspension of vigilance officials "who framed PCS officer Tarsem Chand in Faridkot", issuance of SOP for inquiries against officers and review of all inquiries lodged by the vigilance against government officers from all departments.

Meanwhile, the Opposition Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) slammed the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government for not following standard procedures before charging the bureaucrats on corruption charges.

"Employees of all the departments are going on strike as the government is missing. The state's chief minister is incompetent and ignorant about what is happening in Punjab," SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal said.

Arora's anticipatory bail plea denied

CHANDIGARH: The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Tuesday denied anticipatory bail to former Punjab minister Sunder Sham Arora. Last week, the Vigilance Bureau (VB) registered a case against Arora, IAS officer Neelima, and nine other government officials for the transfer/bifurcation of an industrial plot to a real estate company and allowing it to establish a township by carving out plots.

Go First gets notice after 55 passengers left on bus

NEW DELHI: After a Go First Airways flight took off from Bengaluru with over 50 passengers forgotten in a bus on the tarmac, aviation regulator DGCA has sent notice to the airline flagging "multiple mistakes". The airline apologised today for the incident calling it an "inadvertent oversight".

Dense fog envelops region; air, rail traffic hit

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

Dense to extremely dense fog conditions engulfed northern parts of the country on Tuesday morning, with less than 100 m visibility at 8.30 am in several areas, including Jammu, Punjab, Haryana, while in Delhi's Palam area it dropped to zero.

"Less than 100 m visibility at 8.30 am in Jammu division's Jammu, U'khand's Pantnagar, Punjab's Patiala, Amritsar and Ludhiana, Haryana's Bhiwani and Karnal, Delhi's Palam, Raj's Ganganagar, UP's Bareilly, Bahraich, Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Prayagraj and Bihar's Gaya, Bhagalpur and Purnea," India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

As many as 40 flights, scheduled to depart from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI), were delayed



because of dense fog.

While several domestic flights queued for departures were delayed because of inclement weather in the national

capital, 18 more flights scheduled to touch down at the Delhi airport were also delayed.

Thirty-nine trains were delayed by an

hour to five-and-a-half hours due to the foggy weather, a Northern Railways spokesperson said, according to news agency PTI.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that cold to severe wave conditions will continue in parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, north Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand over the next few days.

"Dense to very dense fog" has been predicted at many places including Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad (PoK), Himachal Pradesh, and West Rajasthan.

The national capital recorded a minimum temperature of 3.8 degrees Celsius, which was lower than most places in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand for the sixth consecutive day.



Rahul visits Golden Temple as 'Yatra' enters Punjab

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi paid obeisance at the Golden Temple in Amritsar on Tuesday afternoon before his nationwide mass connect programme 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' begins its Punjab leg on Wednesday.

Page 2



Centre sanctions Rs 64 cr for crop diversification

In order to encourage farmers to shift from paddy to relatively less water guzzling crops like maize, millets and cotton, the Centre has sanctioned Rs 64 crore for the crop diversification plan for Punjab.

Page 3



Guts and Glory: The Brave Dogra, Lala Ram

Lance Naik Lala Ram of 41ST Dogra (Now 3rd Battalion, the DOGRA Regiment) was awarded two gallantry awards; the Victoria Cross and the St George 1st class by Russia in 1916, a rare honour.

Page 4

PAGE 1 PLUS

Punjab farmers' protest at toll plazas

NHAI claims daily loss of Rs 1.33 cr; moves court

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court against Punjab claiming that it incurred a daily loss of around Rs 1.33 crore following the prevention of toll fee collection "illegally" by protesting farmers who shut down its toll plazas in several districts of Punjab.

The petition against the state of Punjab, Director General of Police and eight deputy commissioners say the NHAI had to incur losses amounting to a whopping Rs 1348.77 crore "in a similar situation earlier where the toll operations were closed by an agitating union for 440 days from October 1, 2020 to December 15, 2021.

In the petition filed before Justice Vinod S Bhardwaj, the NHAI added the protestors preventing toll fee collection had resulted in a significant revenue loss to the Central government exchequer.

The NHAI also sought directions to the respondents to take active measures to restore law and order and to facilitate and support it in the toll fee collection from the plazas located within Punjab by providing security and administrative assistance for smooth functioning "against the forceful stoppage of toll plazas and illegal operation of the same by certain protestors".

Rahul Gandhi visits Golden Temple as 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' enters Punjab

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi paid obeisance at the Golden Temple in Amritsar on Tuesday afternoon before his nationwide mass connect programme 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' begins its Punjab leg on Wednesday.

Sharing pictures of a turbaned Gandhi from Golden Temple, Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring wrote on Twitter: "Before starting the Padyatra in Punjab, bowed down with Rahul Gandhiji at Sri Harimandar Sahib and prayed for the good of all. The 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', which is being conducted for the brotherhood of the country, will be a historic event in Punjab as well as in the entire country."

He added: "All set for #BharatJodoYatra to enter Punjab today. @RahulGandhiJi is



scripting history. Punjabis have always been part of great & glorious events & movements. Saying it again. It's not

Congress party's Yatra. It's Yatra of Indians, by Indians for Indians. Jai Hind." After a halt at New Anaj Mandi, Sirhind,

in Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib on Tuesday night, the Punjab leg of the Yatra will resume from there on Wednesday morning.

The Haryana leg of the march concluded on Tuesday. Rahul had resumed the foot march from Shahpur in Ambala Cantt. The Yatra had entered Haryana's Panipat from neighbouring Uttar Pradesh on Thursday and later it also passed through Karnal and Kurukshetra districts before concluding in Ambala district.

Earlier in the day, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted, "Day 116 —#BharatJodoYatra finishes Haryana leg in Ambala now. 2mrw morning is Punjab leg. There can be no better way to begin than with a pilgrimage to holiest Golden Temple in Amritsar."

"There'll be no padyatra this afternoon so that @RahulGandhican pay his respects there," Ramesh added.

Bengaluru Metro pillar crashes; woman, son killed

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
BENGALURU, JANUARY 10

A woman and her three-year-old son died, while her husband and daughter were injured after an under-construction Metro pillar fell on their two-wheeler in Bengaluru, Karnataka, on Tuesday.

The incident happened in Bengaluru's Nagavara area this morning when Tejasvani,

Lohith and their twin children - a daughter and a son - were passing through the stretch on their two-wheeler.

The 40-foot-long iron pillar crashed on them.

Lohith was driving the bike and Tejasvani was riding pillion and both of them were wearing helmets.

Tejasvani and her son Vihan sustained grievous injuries in the accident. They were rushed to a nearby hospital by

passers-by where they succumbed to their injuries.

Lohith and his daughter are being treated at the hospital.

The police registered a case and will investigate negligence by Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL).

Meanwhile, local residents and commuters staged a protest in the area against the city's civic body Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP).

Kurukshetra doctor murder case cracked, five arrested

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

Haryana Police on Tuesday cracked the murder case of a doctor that took place in Kurukshetra on January 9 within 15 hours and arrested five miscreants who had looted cash and jewellery, a spokesman of Haryana Police said here today. The police nabbed the accused after a brief exchange of fire.

The spokesman said the accused were nabbed after a police team chased them on the Pehwa-Dhand Road. When the police asked the accused to surrender, they started firing at the cops. But were later arrested.

In retaliatory fire by the police, one of the accused got injured and was admitted to a hospital for treatment. Police has also recovered four "desi katta" and one country made pistol from their possession.

Out of the five accused, four are residents of district Kaithal and one hails from district Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh.

On January 9, the accused had entered a house located on the first floor of Atul Clinic in Sector 13, Kurukshetra, and killed Dr Vinita Arora and decamped with cash and jewellery.

50 detained in J&K's Rajouri

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
RAJOURI/ JAMMU, JANUARY 10

Massive search operations to track down the terrorists behind the January 1 attack on minority community in Jammu and Kashmir's Dhangri village continued for the ninth day on Tuesday here even as over 50 people have been detained so far for questioning.

Seven persons were killed, including two children, and 14 others were injured in the terrorist attack.

The Army, police and CRPF are conducting a joint cordon and search operation across two dozen villages where terrorist presence was reported ahead of the attack. Special operational teams of Jammu and Kashmir police, moved from outside Rajouri, have also been deployed at designated locations, officials said.

"Anti-terrorist operation is going on at a massive scale to neutralise the terrorists



involved in the Dhangri attack. There are some vital leads and we are working on these to bring the culprits to book," Senior Superintendent of Police Rajouri, Mohammad Aslam told PTI.

Following the attack, the administration strengthened Village Defence Guards (VDGs) comprising local volunteers and

the border grid to keep a strict vigil on possible infiltration routes, PTI quoted officials as saying.

Additional troops of the CRPF and police have also been deployed in sensitive areas to strengthen vigil. The local police also put up posters at various places across the district announcing a bounty of Rs 10 lakh

to anyone giving credible information about the terrorists.

Police have also deployed additional force at border posts as part of enhanced security near the Line of Control (LoC) to keep a close vigil on notorious infiltration routes.

Officials said over 50 suspects have been detained so far during the ongoing operation and are being questioned for their alleged links with terrorists. They said several vital leads have been found and it is almost evident that the terrorists were present in the town before the attack.

Meanwhile, as part of efforts to strengthen VDGs and sharpen their firing skills, the Indian Army and local police held a special firing practice session for over 50 volunteers from different villages along the LoC this morning. Weapon handlers and shooting experts of the Army demonstrated proper use of weapons to VDGs who later practised firing.

PUNJAB

Centre sanctions Rs 64 cr for crop diversification

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

In order to encourage farmers to shift from paddy to relatively less water guzzling crops like maize, millets and cotton, the Centre has sanctioned Rs 64 crore for the crop diversification plan (CDP) for Punjab.

According to reports, the state government plans to reduce the area under traditional paddy crop by 10 lakh hectares over the next five years.

The funds being sanctioned under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) by the Central ministry of agriculture include Rs 34 crore for subsidised machinery and tools to facilitate cultivation of crops other than paddy and Rs 30 crore for extension services and demonstration.

For facilitating cultivation of maize, millets and cotton, the state agriculture department has sought applications from farmers to buy subsidised machines.

The scheme is reportedly an extension of the crop residue management (CRM) plan for in-situ and ex-situ management of paddy straw started four years ago to discourage farmers from burning of paddy stubble which leads to severe environmen-



tal and health concerns.

The Centre and Punjab government have been encouraging farmers for the last several years to switch from paddy to crops other than paddy which require minimal irrigation.

In 2022, the state recorded around 2 percent year-on-year decline in the total area under paddy to 30.84 lakh hectares. In 2021, the total area under paddy was 31.41 lakh hectares in the state.

5,500 litres of water to produce a kg of rice

In kharif season, Punjab grows paddy over an area of about 32 lakh hectares, which needs irrigation and at least four inches puddling at time of transplantation. As per the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, 2,500 to 5,500 litres of water is needed to produce a kg of rice. For one hectare of paddy field, 50-60 lakh litre water is required depending on the soil quality.

State is ready

In September 2022, Punjab Chief Minister had said that the state is fully ready to adopt crop diversification and instead of paddy, the farmers are ready to sow sunflower, maize and pulses but the Centre must provide guaranteed mechanism to give adequate and assured price for these crops. He said that this will help in checking the depleting water table on one hand and making agriculture a profitable venture on the other.

Clean, potable water to villages govt's top priority: Jimpa

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

Water Supply and Sanitation Minister Bram Shanker Jimpa said that Punjab Government is making stupendous efforts to ensure supply of clean water in those villages, where the ground water was contaminated.

He said the Punjab government and World Bank had launched the Moga project, a comprehensive surface water supply scheme designed to provide clean and safe drinking water to affected villages in the region.

"It serves as a model for other regions looking to improve their drinking water supply and promote social development. The project has had a significant and transformative impact on the quality of life and livelihoods of residents in the region. By providing access to clean, safe drinking water, the project has reduced the prevalence of waterborne diseases and improved the overall health of the community," added Jimpa.

Officials said despite all challenges, the project is a major success. The 50 MLD water treatment plant is now fully operational, providing clean and safe drinking water to 85 villages with a population of approximately 4 lakh. The plant has been designed to operate on a sustainable basis, using state-of-the-art technology to minimise energy and water consumption. The project is not only providing safe water but will save 5 crore litres of ground water daily.

Maghi Mela special train to run from Jan 14-16

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
MOGA, JANUARY 10

On the occasion of Maghi Mela to be held at Muktsar Sahib, Northern Railway will operate a special train between Bathinda-Fazilka-Bathinda on January 14, 15 and 16 for the convenience of passengers.

The Bathinda-Fazilka Mela special train will leave Bathinda at 8:05 am on January 14, 15 and 16 and reach Fazilka at 11:50 am.

In return journey, Fazilka-Bathinda Mela special train will leave Fazilka at 5 pm on January 14, 15 and 16 and reach Bathinda at 8:55 pm.

This Mela special train route will pass through Goneana, Bhai Bhagta, Chandbhan, Gangsar Jaito, Ajit Gill Matta, Romana Albel Singh, Kot Kapura, Vander Jatana, Bariwala, Jhabelwali, Chadewan, Muktsar, Badhai Ballam Garh, Bhagsar, Lakhewali, Rodan Wala, Chakpakhewala and will stop at Chakbanwala stations in both the directions.

Punjab will turn 1.8 MT paddy straw per year into CBG: Arora

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

In a bid to find a sustainable solution to the problem of stubble burning and supplement the income of farmers of the state, the Punjab Government has planned to utilise around 1.8 million tonne (MT) paddy straw in the under implementation 43 compressed biogas (CBG) projects per annum.

This was disclosed by Aman Arora, Minister of New and Renewable Energy Sources, while chairing a CBG Developers' Meet at PEDA Complex here on Tuesday.

Addressing the CBG Developers, the Cabinet Minister informed that the state is in process of forming core group of all stakeholders like PEDA, GAIL, CGD Companies, CBG producers and PBIP, to coordinate for off-take of CBG through gas pipelines.

He said that Asia's largest CBG plant of total capacity 33.23 tonne per day (TPD) has already been commissioned in Sangrur and another CBG project of 12 TPD capacity has been commissioned at Khanna and is under trial run. Presently, about 3 tonne CBG is produced in the plant daily.

As many as 41 additional CBG projects will be commissioned in next 2 years, he added.



ASIA'S LARGEST CBG PLANT OF TOTAL CAPACITY 33.23 TONNE PER DAY (TPD) HAS ALREADY BEEN COMMISSIONED IN SANGRUR

On completion, all these projects will produce 515.58 TPD CBG per annum by consuming around 2 million tonne agriculture residue annually, said Arora, while

adding that the state has a potential to set up 200 more CBG projects of 10 TPD capacity each in addition to the above projects as around 20 million tonne of paddy straw is produced per annum in the state.

Assuring every possible support to CBG developers, Arora said that Punjab Government has been providing many incentives such as exemption from land registration charges and stamp duty, electricity charges, exemption from CLU and EDC charges, besides ensuring all facilities at single stop clearances through Invest Punjab.

Dr Balbir Singh assumes charge as Health Minister

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 10

Punjab Cabinet Minister Dr Balbir Singh today assumed charge of the Health and Family Welfare, Medical Education and Research and Elections Departments in the presence of his Cabinet colleagues.

Dr Balbir Singh, MLA from Patiala Rural, who won the 2022 Assembly election by a whopping margin of over 50,000 votes, expressed gratitude towards the party national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and assured that he would discharge the responsibility assigned to him with full dedication and honesty.

Dr Singh said that the Delhi model of development has been popularised in the country and abroad, and the Delhi model will be delivered in each and every corner of the state of Punjab.

EDITORIAL

The Express India NEWS

Rahul Gandhi in Punjab

Rahul Gandhi is wrapping up his Bharat Jodo Yatra, which is on its last leg. After Punjab only the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir will be left. Rahul at the end of the 'yatra' will have walked about 4000 kms on foot from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, not an ordinary feat for anyone. Criticism against him for what he does or does not do notwithstanding, the 'yatra' has succeeded in mobilizing the party cadres wherever it went. The Congress workers have shown great excitement and others great curiosity. The impact of the yatra has not been lost even on the Bharatiya Janata Party either. The party is likely to come out with an appropriate response sooner than later.

For the Congress in Punjab it has come at quite an appropriate time when the General Elections are slightly over a year away. The Congress is passing through the most difficult and toughest of phases in its recent history in Punjab. Its top leadership including former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, former PCC President Sunil Jakhar and several former ministers are no longer with the party. Most of the senior party leaders like another former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, who remained away from the country and returned only recently, have preferred to maintain a low profile. Another firebrand leader Navjot Singh Sidhu is in jail and may be released on the occasion of the Republic Day.

It is only the PCC President Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, the Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha Partap Singh Bajwa and Chairman All India Kisan Congress and Bholath MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira who have been proactive. The Bharat Jodo Yatra has helped in shaking their inertia. Despite severe cold in the region, the Yatra has received good response in neighbouring Haryana. It is expected to get equally good responses in Punjab as well. But the good response alone will not necessarily translate into the party's performance in the next General Elections.

The current crisis in the Congress party is also attributed to "mishandling" by Rahul and his sister Priyanka Gandhi. There is a strong feeling among the party's rank and file that had the situation been handled carefully and differently in September 2021, the Congress might well have returned to power or at worst would have emerged as a single largest party. But what is done cannot be undone. The party will need to plan for the future. When the party was losing one state after another, Punjab put a stop to it and gave a thumping mandate to the party in 2017. Congress can again script and strengthen the party's revival. It will need deft handling. The central leadership will need to ensure that everyone is taken along and nobody feels ignored and sidelined. It is all the more important under current circumstances when the party leaders and workers have multiple options available to switch sides. Congress must beware that if leaders like Capt Amarinder and Jakhar can leave and join the BJP, anything can happen.

Of bureaucratic procedures!

BY VIMAL SUMBLY

Punjab bureaucrats are up in arms against the state government after two of their colleagues have fallen in the vigilance bureau net. Both the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Punjab Civil Service (PCS) officers are angry at the vigilance bureau. While in the case of the IAS, one of their colleagues has been named in an FIR over, what vigilance bureau calls, illegal transfer of industrial land, the PCS officers are angry that one of their colleagues was arrested by the bureau on corruption charges. Both the IAS Officers Association and the PCS Officers Association have approached the Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann alleging due procedure was not followed in both the cases, neither in the registration of an FIR nor in case of the arrest.

While the Chief Minister is already seized of the matter and has already asked the Chief Secretary to look into the complaints, it reminds of a classical anecdote related to a retired bureaucrat, who was characteristically and stubbornly "follower" of the procedures. After retirement, he started interfering in the day-to-day affairs of his family raising questions about everything. Obviously it disturbed the peace of the house and he started visiting a nearby

WHILE THE CHIEF MINISTER IS ALREADY SEIZED OF THE MATTER AND HAS ALREADY ASKED THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO LOOK INTO THE COMPLAINTS, IT REMINDS OF A CLASSICAL ANECDOTE RELATED TO A RETIRED BUREAUCRAT, WHO WAS CHARACTERISTICALLY AND STUBBORNLY "FOLLOWER" OF THE PROCEDURES.

temple. The priest there noticed his discomfort and asked him about his problem. The retired bureaucrat told him that all his life he had been "a strict follower of rules and procedures" and would not allow anything without following the due procedure. He alleged his family would accuse him of being capable of doing nothing other than raising objections and poking his nose into everything in the name of "following the procedure".

The priest offered him a job that suited his "principles and temperament" so well. The priest asked the retired bureaucrat to stand at the temple gate and ensure that whosoever visited the temple took off his shoes before going inside.

The job suited the retired bureaucrat quite well as it was perfectly according

to his aptitude and experience as it required nothing to be done on his part. People would come, take off their shoes, pay obeisance inside the temple and leave. Everything went off so well and so smoothly as the retired bureaucrat was working so efficiently to the extent during his tenure "not a single person had gone inside the temple wearing the shoes". He was all praise for himself for ensuring the compliance. He mentioned this to the priest also who also appreciated his "work efficiency".

One day, as the retired bureaucrat was doing his duty by standing outside the temple, one pilgrim walked towards the temple barefoot. He had made a wish that he would pay a visit to the temple walking the entire distance from home to the temple "barefoot". As the retired bureaucrat spotted the pilgrim, he asked

him to take off his shoes. This did not convince the retired bureaucrat. He insisted on the pilgrim to take off his shoes. The pilgrim tried to reason out with him that how can he take off the shoes when he was not wearing any. Then the retired bureaucrat showed the rulebook to the pilgrim that the rule of the temple is that everyone has to take off his shoes before going inside the temple.

He tried to reason with the pilgrim that he was only doing his "duty". When the pilgrim realized that the gatekeeper at the temple would not listen he asked him the way out. The bureaucrat told him that it was so simple. He advised the pilgrim to go back home and come wearing his shoes and take those off before going inside the temple. That is the "procedure", he reasoned with the pilgrim.

That is how religiously the bureaucrats follow the procedures so strictly. No wonder, they are raising "procedural" objections over the action against their colleagues. After all, when they stick to "procedures" themselves so steadfastly, they deserve to be dealt with strictly according to the "due procedure".

The Chief Minister has done well by asking the Chief Secretary to find out whether the "procedure" was followed while initiating action against two of them on the charges of corruption.

GUTS AND GLORY ON FOREIGN SOILS – VIII

The Brave Dogra, Lala Ram



BY MAJ GEN HARVIJAY SINGH (RETD)

Lance Naik Lala Ram of 41st Dogra (Now 3rd Battalion, the DOGRA Regiment) was awarded two gallantry awards; the Victoria Cross and the St George 1st class by Russia in 1916, a rare honour.

During World War I, in Mesopotamia the Allies were in a running battle with the Ottoman Turkish forces for control of Baghdad in Nov 1915. The force was thrown back to Kut-Al-Amara about 160 kms from Baghdad, and put under a painful and humiliating siege by the Turks.

A large British and Indian force was launched from Mesopotamia to break the siege. 41st Dogra was part of one such assault on 20/21 Jan 1916. The force of 10,000 suffered heavy casualties: 2700 killed. According to the War diary of Expeditionary Force Delta, only 25 men of 41st Dogra reached the enemy trenches.

In this attack Lance Naik Lala earned his Victoria Cross for rescuing six including two British officers, The Citation:

For conspicuous bravery. Finding a British officer of another regiment lying seriously wounded near the enemy trenches, he dragged him to a temporary shelter which he himself had made and in which he already had 4 wounded men. After bandaging his wounds, he heard the cries of the call of his own Adjutant who was lying in the open seriously wounded a little away. The enemy was not more than 100 yards distant, and it seemed certain death to go out in that direction, but Lance Naik Lala insisted on going out for assisting his adjutant and offered to crawl back with him on his back at once.

When this was not permitted, he stripped off his own clothing to keep the officer warmer, and stayed with him just before dark, when he returned to his shelter. After dark he carried the first wounded officer back to the main trenches and then returning back with a stretcher carried back his adjutant. He set a magnificent example of courage and devotion to his officers.



(London Gazette-13 May 1916).

The Adjutant just before being taken to the Operating Room, where he died, dictated this account to another officer: Then, as I lay in great pain, suddenly appeared Lala and lay down beside me with cheering words. First he bound up my wounds and then taking off his own coat spread it over me. He then lay down lengthways so as to protect me from the enemy's bullets.

For five hours he lay like this in the wet and cold and all the time kept talking to me cheerfully and encouragingly to keep my spirits up. At length,

when it grew dark, he crept off and said he was going back to get assistance and would soon return. I slept or dozed for some time and then heard Lala's return. "It is good, Sahib, very good. I have brought up some stretcher-bearers not far from here. I will lie flat whilst you get on my back and then I will crawl away with you on my hands and knees".....

Maj Gen Sir George Younghusband, commanding the assaulting force wrote in his book: A Soldier's Memoirs of Peace and War. ".....The Victoria Cross had only recently been granted to Indian soldiers and perhaps there is no worthier wearer of the badge of honour than Lance Naik Lala of the Dogras". (pp. 334-336)

Lala returned to India in 1917 and again saw action in 1919 in the third Afghan war. He was promoted to the rank of Jemadar in 1923 and retired after 25 years of service in 1926.

I built up this story by simply quoting those who witnessed this extraordinary event. Reading the accounts gave me Goosebumps, I did not have the strength to say anything more.

The Indian Armed Forces stand tall among their global peers because of their rich battle-hardened heritage, high motivation and tough training.