

Hon'ble the Prime Minister,
Government of India,
New Delhi.

Esteemed Madam,

We take liberty to place the following facts before your honour for favour of your very sympathetic consideration and early remedial action which is necessitated in the larger interests of the Country's integrity and security.

After India's emergence as a sovereign independent democratic country in 1947, the people of Ladakh whose wellbeing remained ignored during the autocratic rule of the Maharaja, started looking for a better deal in the democratic set-up of the State. It did not however, take long for the Ladakhis to realise that the State Authorities looked upon the backward area of Ladakh as a part of the State which did not deserve to be treated at par with its other counterparts. This innate apathy on the part of the State Government prompted the people of Ladakh to send a delegation to Delhi in 1949 and apprised the late lamented Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru of the abject poverty and backwardness of the people of Ladakh and praying for Ladakh being Centrally Administered. The late Prime Minister while appreciating the demand of the delegation counselled patience and assured it of Central Action at appropriate time. The demand for Central Administration was renewed in 1962 in the wake of Chinese Aggression but it was again put off to an opportune time.

The entire period since independence witnessed misrule in the District in such calculated moves on the part of the State Government which not only reflected its indifference towards the backward and poverty stricken people of the area but which, in the long run, would shake the very foundation and integrity of the Country. It has never been the concern of the State Government to think in the terms of ameliorating the lot of the people inhabiting an area which is not only sensitive but double the size of the rest of the State. The following facts would substantiate these just and genuine allegations of the people of Ladakh against its rulers.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE MISRULE:

Before dealing with this and other subjects in the memorandum it may be respectfully submitted that what follows is not the expression of any communal bias in our mind and our submission should not be misunderstood or misinterpreted as attempts to spread and project communal virus in the body politics of the State but we have been compelled to make these submissions of course whittling down our grievances in this matter to the minimum.

The District from the Deputy Commissioner and downwards has mostly remained under the charge of the Muslim officers from Srinagar. We are sorry to say that efficiency apart, these officers are hostile to the local Buddhist population and indulge in exploitation of the worst pattern. These officers work with a set and proclaimed policy of victimising the Buddhist population ignoring that the legitimate demands and rights and openly adopting means and doing acts which has brought untold suffering to the Buddhist population compelling them to leave the State with the Buddhist population compelling them to a negligible minority, though this element of reducing population even at this stage constitutes the majority in the District. There is a systematic policy followed by the State Authorities in the District to adopt indirect means by way of temptations to persuade Buddhists to become converts to Islam. The State officers at Leh appear through their conduct as having directions from higher authorities to create dissension among the Buddhist on the one hand and Buddhists and non-

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Buddhists on the other. Such a policy of divide and rule resorted to by the State authorities has not only led to the emergence of two Congress parties in the District thereby weakening the otherwise strong roots of the organisation but it has also given a blow to the unity, harmony and fraternal relations amongst various communities of the area. In such a state of affairs when the unity of the people is deleteriously being finished, it would be difficult to expect the people to stand as one man and defend the strategic borders as they did during the Chinese or Pak aggressions. Restoration of unity among various sections of the local population is, therefore, of prime importance for survival of India as a unified secular country. In order, therefore, to attain this vital objective which is being defeated by the misrule perpetuated presently in the District, the District needs to be taken over centrally and neat and efficient administrative machinery provided for it. Once the State authorities succeed in their designs, this area which is at present a strong hold of secularism would be converted into a communal hot bed and a strong pro-Pak base. It is therefore, in the National Interest that that such unhealthy political trends in such an area are checked before things become unmanageable.

2. ECONOMIC BACKWARDNESS:

The economic backwardness of the District needs to be seen to be believed. The so called development programmes initiated in the area have yielded no tangible results. The enormous funds provided by the Centre for Development Projects of the Area have literally gone down the drain. The poor Ladakhi is still in the grip of abject poverty when the people belonging to the Kashmir and Jammu have become more prosperous than any people in other parts of the country. The Ladakhi has no hand in the re-shaping and re-building of his home land which he thinks the Buddha alone can save. More pitiable is the plight of the people of Zaskar and Chang-thang. These areas as also some parts of Kargil Tehsil present an inexpressible picture of backwardness, poverty, disease and illiteracy. The plight of the people of these areas particularly, is a blot on the fair face of India which is wedded to a Socialistic Pattern of Society. The apathy of the local administration towards the development of the area is testified by the fact that huge sums are either deleteriously allowed to lapse or are diverted towards areas inhabited predominantly by the other community. To quote an instance, the amount of Rs.60,000/- earmarked for development of the most backward area of Chang-thang during 1971-72 under the "CRASH SCHEME" was diverted arbitrarily towards Kargil area.

3. EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS:

The people of the District are by and large illiterate. There being no college in the District the poor boys and girls find it difficult to pursue higher education outside the District. It is a calculated State Policy not to open avenues of Higher education for the poor Ladakhis. No Scholarship facility is available for Ladakhis who are studying outside the state and the lumpsum assistance provided for their studies within the State is too inadequate to attract students for higher studies. There is no dearth of talented young boys and girls in Ladakh. All that they lack is the opportunity to prove their merit. It is not incredible that for a vast area like Ladakh and the backwardness of its people, no college has so far been established in the District and that in view of the general poverty of the people, very few boys can afford higher education at Srinagar. It is evidently a calculated policy adopted by the State authorities to grab legitimate share of the Ladakhis in higher services on the

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aparent pretext of nonavailability of suitable hands

4. TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATION:

All these years the State Government has done practically nothing in connecting the District with a net work of roads. There is no transport system in the area worth the name and as such pony continues to be the principal mode of transport in most parts of the District. The postal communication system is also far from satisfactory and the same needs to be improved considerably. For economic development of the area particularly the backward area of Ladakh, an effective transport system inter-linking all areas by wheeled traffic and the worth the name communication system is a pressing need but the state authorities have completely ignored this aspect also. The lack of initiative on the part of administration is reflected by the fact that for construction of Kargil Zaskar Road at a distance of 110 K.M.S. it has taken from 1962-63 (to construct a strip of 50-55 Kilo Metres) till date. Providence alone knows when the remaining strip would be completed.

5. Agriculture:

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of the District. As it is, the main source of irrigation at present is the melted water from glaciers; and snow bound mountains. Failure of rain or snow results in drought in the area. The State Government has taken no positive steps in digging canals for irrigation purposes. Such a step would also help in bringing fallow land under the plough and thus increase productivity in the area which could not only become self sufficient in matter of food stuffs but would also enable to meet defence requirements in the area. These consequently would help stop air-lifting of food stuffs for defence requirements at high cost.

6. FORESTS:

Instead of promoting forests in this generally barren area, the forest authorities ported at Leh have pursued a concerted policy of felling poplar trees and consuming them as fuel. There is virtually no poplar tree left in the area which was the only timber available for construction purposes. What adverse effect such a step have left on the building projects of the District is understandable and need not as such, be over emphasised. This is another instance of inefficiency and mal-administration in District.

7. Animal Husbandary:

It is well within everyone's knowledge that Ladakh was a major Pushmina producing area sometimes back. As no step has been taken in promoting growth of live stocks particularly sheep and goats, the rate of wool pushmina production has suffered a serious set-back. Promotion of animal husbandry is now all the more necessary with the pushmina Producing Chang-thang area having gone to the Chinese. If proper attention was given to live stock growing and production of Pushmina wool in particular, it would not only uplift the District economically but would help the growth of the Pushmina Industry which earns quite large amount of foreign exchange. On the other hand, fabulous sums are spent and lent to people of the valley for sheep farming and sheep breeding most of which is misused by the benefiseries in collusion with the administrative machinery. Due to the indifferent attitude of the authorities, the Pushmina Industry which, not long ago, provided raw material for finished products in the State, has virtually got erased in the District. This Industry could have been developed fruitfully had the State authorities not neglected this also as in the case of

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other economic potentials in the area.

The complete neglect of the people of Ladakh at the hands of the State Authorities drove them to seek NEFA type administration for their homeland in 1967. The people subsequently placed their major grievances before the Gajendragadkar Commission on whose recommendations no action worth the name was taken by the state Government as would be seen from Annexures to this petition taken from the Gajendragadkar Commission Report which reflects the glaring disparity in the allocation of funds provided for the development of Ladakh on the one hand and Jammu & Kashmir on the other during the previous 5 Years plans of the State. It would be worthwhile to reproduce verbatim which the Commission has said about this District, "Ladakh District is in a somewhat unhappy position. It is one of the remotest District of the Country. It is cut off from the rest of the Country for the major part of the year. Even when it is not so cut off, access to it is difficult because of the inadequacy of the means of transport. The number of civilian Buses of Trucks plying between Srinagar and Leh is inadequate and the interior places in Ladakh are virtually unconnected. Government servants from other regions posted to the District try to get away from it as quickly as possible because of the rather forbidding terrain and climate. An adequate number of qualified Ladakhis formanning the services in the District is not yet available. We were told that few Ministers and senior officers of the State Government visit the District. In former days it used to have an appreciable trade and commerce with Tibet and the adjoining parts of China. This has now come to an end. There is not a single Degree College in the whole of this far-flung District. By all accounts, therefore, the conditions in the Ladakh District are difficult, and its people have a feeling of isolation and neglect." (Para 7.45. Suggested remedies by the Commission for the Development of Ladakh are given in the annexure of this memorandum)

The non-plan provisions for Ladakh are equally shabby compared to the rest of the State. As testified by the annexures it may be specially mentioned that with regard to (i) Development (ii) Employment (iii) Education and (iv) Conditions giving rise to the irritations and tensions, the State Government took no positive step as was pleaded before the commission by the people of Ladakh. Our demand for treating the people of Ladakh as belonging to a Scheduled Tribe and the area as a Scheduled Area did not materialise because of the apathy of the State Government towards it. Even the agriment signed by the leaders of Ladakh and the representatives of the State Government as a result of disturbances in Ladakh sometime back has not so far been implemented.

As a result of the indifference on the part of the State Government the people of Ladakh have finally realised that their salvation rests with severance of their relations with the State of Jammu & Kashmir and throwing their lots directly in the hands of the Government of India. This demand for Central rule is gaining momentum and nothing can now stop the Ladakhis from attaining that cherished objective. It is now amply clear that the peoples demand for central rule is motivated by two factors namely ammeliorate the economic lot of the people who are trailing behind in all but particularly this field and secondly to ensure the solidarity and integrity of the Country for which Ladakh must continue to be a predominantly Buddhist area and which is possible only under the Central rule. The State Government's nefarious attempts to turn the area into a stronghold of pro-pak propoganda and obliterate the denominational majority of the Buddhists is within everybody's knowledge.

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In view of the facts stated above, We urge upon your honour to consider our just demand for Central Administration for Ladakh in which we see the fulfillment of our aspirations of re-building Ladakh of our dreams. This demand as has been explained in the most unmistakable words can alone save that sensitive and strategic area the security of which is intimately connected with the security and defence of the Country at large and we trust that the Government of India will, in the circumstances, take into its hands the direct administration of the area before it is too late.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

(THUPSTAN CHHEWANG) Advocate.
Chairman Action Committee
For Central Administration
in L A D A K H.

(LAMA LOBZANG)
General Secretary,
Action Committee for
Central Administration in
L A D A K H.

Dated 25th March, 1974.
PCS Delhi.