

All India Bank Strike Evokes Strong Response; Employees Press for 5-Day Week

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 11: Banking operations were affected on Friday as bank employees and officers observed the nationwide strike called by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) in support of their long-pending demands, prominently the implementation of a Five-Day Work Week in the banking industry.

The strike was described by union representatives as a strong and successful nationwide action, with employees and officers staying away from work in support of the call. At Jammu, under the Leadership of Mr. Rajesh Mehta AIBOC Secretary Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh, employees from different banks and constituent unions participated in the local programme.

Union leaders said bank employees had been forced to resort to strike because their justified demands had remained unresolved despite a formal agreement and repeated assurances. The principal demand relates to Five-Day Banking,



for which an agreement was signed between the Indian Banks & Association (IBA) and the bank unions in March 2024. More than two and a half years later, the agreed arrangement has still not been implemented, they said.

They pointed out that five-day working has been in force in Central Government offices since 1985 and is also followed in State Government offices, district offices, courts, Income Tax offices, the stock market, the Reserve Bank of India and LIC. In most of these institutions, there is no alternative physical ser-

vice available on weekends. Banking services, however, remain available to customers 24 hours a day and seven days a week through ATMs, internet banking, mobile banking, UPI and other digital and alternate channels. The unions also noted that five-day banking is the prevailing practice in almost all countries across the world. As part of the March 2024 agreement, the unions had agreed to extend the working and banking business hours by 40 minutes on each working day so that declaring the remaining Saturdays as holidays would not reduce the total banking hours

available to customers.

A significant aspect highlighted by the unions was the financial sacrifice made by employees participating in the strike. In the banking industry, wages are deducted for the day of strike. Thus, every employee and officer who joined Friday's action did so knowing that one day's salary would be lost. Union representatives said this underlined the seriousness of the demand and the frustration caused by the prolonged delay in implementing an already agreed measure. Apart from Five-Day Banking, UFBU has also raised objections to the unilateral and discriminatory PLI framework and has sought its review through bilateral discussions with the unions and associations, along with settlement of residual issues pending in the industry.

Speaking at the local programme, UFBU Leaders said, "The success of the strike shows that bank employees are united on these issues.

Jammu gets a new clothing destination: Vastra Mahal opens Outlet

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, SEP 11

A new Vastra Mahal Clothing Brand Factory Outlet was inaugurated today in Jammu, adding a new destination for affordable and quality fashion to the city's retail landscape.

The outlet, located opposite Gujjar Nagar Police Station, Jammu, offers a wide range of stitched and unstitched garments, kurtis, purses and other clothing and fashion products, with special emphasis on competitive and discounted pricing.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Dr. Gautam Mengi, Prant Sanghchalak, RSS Jammu & Kashmir, said that initiatives which promote entrepreneurship, strengthen local business and create employment opportunities for young people are important for the economic development of the region. Mahant Rameshwar Dass of Shri Ram Mandir, Purani Mandi, Jammu; and Adv. Purnima Sharma, BJP J&K Spokesperson and former Deputy Mayor, Jammu.

Speaking on the occasion, the dignitaries welcomed the opening of the new outlet and appreciated the initiative to bring quality clothing and fashion



products to customers at affordable prices.

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Mahant Rameshwar Dass of Shri Ram Mandir, Purani Mandi, Jammu, congratulated the management of Vastra Mahal on the opening of the outlet and extended his blessings for its success.

Adv. Purnima Sharma, BJP J&K Spokesperson and former Deputy Mayor, Jammu, appreciated the initiative and said that new businesses and retail ventures can play an important role in generating employment opportunities for the youth. She said that Jammu has considerable potential for entrepreneurship and commercial growth, and initiatives that combine business expansion with employment generation should be encouraged. The management of Vastra Mahal said the outlet has been established with

the objective of offering customers quality fashion at discounted prices, including both stitched and unstitched clothing, kurtis, purses and other fashion products. The management further highlighted its focus on creating employment opportunities for local youth through retail, sales, customer service and other associated activities.

The newly inaugurated outlet is expected to provide customers in Jammu with another option for shopping for fashion and clothing products under one roof.

NC Calls for Greater Opportunities for Meritorious Local Youth

JAMMU, SEP 10: A delegation of the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference today met the Vice-Chancellor of Cluster University of Jammu, Prof K.S. Chandrasekar and congratulated him on receiving the prestigious VG Patel Runner-Up Award 2026, in recognition of his contributions and achievements in the field of entrepreneurship education, training and mentoring.

The delegation, comprising Ankush Abrol, Provincial Joint Secretary, JKNC; Dr. Vikas Sharma, Coordinator and Secretary, Central Zone, JKNC; and Vikshit, conveyed their warm congratulations and presented the Vice-Chancellor with a Mata ki Chunri and a statue of Gautam Buddha as a gesture of goodwill and appreciation.

During the meeting, the delegation appreciated the Vice-Chancellor's efforts to-



wards the promotion and preservation of Dogri language, culture and regional heritage. They particularly welcomed the forthcoming introduction of Post-Graduate (PG) programmes in Dogri and Urdu, describing the initiative as an important step towards strengthening higher education and creating greater academic opportunities in regional languages.

The delegation emphasized that the PG pro-

gramme in Dogri should be supported with adequate academic infrastructure, qualified faculty, modern teaching resources, research facilities and opportunities for higher studies, enabling students to pursue advanced academic work and contribute meaningfully to the preservation and promotion of Dogri language and literature.

The National Conference leaders also stressed the importance of research, inno-

vation, skill development and entrepreneurship in higher education. They suggested greater emphasis on industry-academia collaboration, practical learning, incubation initiatives and career-oriented programmes so that students are better equipped to meet emerging employment opportunities and contribute to the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

The delegation further emphasized that educated and meritorious youth of Jammu & Kashmir should be encouraged and provided fair opportunities, wherever permissible under applicable rules and regulations. They said that local talent, particularly young researchers, professionals and skilled graduates, should be given meaningful opportunities to contribute to the growth and development of educational institutions and the region.

Snow-bound areas show steady progress in Census 2027 enumeration

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, SEP 11

Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director Census Operations, J&K and Ladakh, Amit Sharma, on Friday reviewed the progress of Population Enumeration in snow-bound areas of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, with district teams reporting satisfactory progress in accordance with prescribed Census guidelines.

Sharma chaired a comprehensive review meeting with Nodal Officers, District Coordinators and other senior officials of the Directorate of Census Operations to assess the status of enumeration in the entire UT of Ladakh, partially snow-bound districts of J&K and Special Charges located in difficult areas.

During the district-wise review, officials apprised the CPCO of the progress made in their respective jurisdictions.

Sharma stressed the need for close coordination, timely reporting and strict adherence to Census procedures, particularly given the challenging geographical conditions in snow-bound areas. The meeting also reviewed preparations for



the District Census Handbook (DCHB) training and fieldwork. Training is scheduled across most districts during the third and fourth weeks of September, while DCHB fieldwork is planned for October 2026.

Deputy Chief Principal Census Officer Manmeet Singh Loomba informed the meeting that training of Charge Officers, Supervisors and Enumerators for all Special Charges falling in snow-bound areas of J&K has been completed and the required Census material supplied.

Similarly, Assistant Chief Principal Census Officer

Jatinder Kumar reported completion of training for all Special Charges in Ladakh, with Census material also provided to the concerned establishments.

The CPCO further reviewed preparations for the forthcoming inspection visit by senior officers of the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India (ORGI), to assess Census preparedness and progress in J&K and Ladakh. Officials said preparations were underway and district teams had been briefed for the inspection.

Appreciating the efforts

of district and field teams, Sharma said simultaneous progress on Population Enumeration, Special Charges and DCHB preparations reflected the scale and complexity of the Census 2027 programme. He called for sustained preparedness and coordination to ensure smooth completion of the exercise in the snow-bound areas.

The meeting was moderated by Joint Chief Principal Census Officer Arun Kumar and attended by Assistant Chief Principal Census Officers and District Coordinators of the Directorate.

Bhalla takes 'Chaupal Pe Charcha' to aggrieved doorsteps

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, SEP 11

Carrying forward the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee's (JKPCC) UT-wide public outreach programme "Chaupal Pe Charcha", JKPCC Working President Raman Bhalla today reached Bandhuraakh (shiv Nagar) in the RS Pura-Jammu South constituency and interacted with residents to listen to their grievances and understand the challenges confronting ordinary people.

The programme provided an opportunity to people from different sections of society to directly place their concerns before the Congress leadership. The interaction covered a wide range of issues affecting daily life, including the recently revised power tariff, unemployment and recruitment, restoration of statehood, inadequate civic and public infrastructure, healthcare facilities, drug abuse, farmers' problems, difficulties faced by traders and small businesses, regularisation of daily wagers and the growing gap between government announcements and their implementation on the ground.

Bhalla said that "Chaupal



Pe Charcha" is not merely a political programme but an effort to reconnect public representatives with the people and understand their problems at the grassroots level. He said that Jammu's development cannot be assessed merely through government announcements or statistics; the real test lies in whether an ordinary family is able to access affordable electricity, quality healthcare, employment, good roads, education and basic civic amenities.

The issue of the revised electricity tariff, which carries an average increase of around 6.83 per cent from September 1, figured prominently during the interaction. Residents expressed concern that increased electricity bills would further strain household budgets as well as small businesses and agricultural activities. Bhalla said that people have every right to question whether

an increase in tariff is accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the quality and reliability of power supply. He stressed that consumers in rural and peripheral areas should not be expected to bear an additional financial burden while continuing to face interruptions and inadequate supply. "People are asking a very simple question: if electricity has become costlier, will the service also become better? The government must provide a clear answer. The common man cannot be expected to continuously absorb additional costs without receiving dependable public services in return," he said.

The Congress leader said that the concerns being voiced at Bandhuraakh (shiv Nagar) are not isolated. They reflect a larger sentiment prevailing across Jammu district and different parts of the Jammu region, where people are seeking responsive govern-

nance and visible improvement in their everyday lives.

Unemployment emerged as another major concern. Young people raised issues relating to recruitment examinations, pending selections, contractual employment and the lack of adequate employment opportunities in both the government and private sectors. Bhalla said the aspirations of Jammu's youth cannot be met through announcements alone. He called for transparent and timely recruitment, filling vacant posts, creating employment opportunities in emerging sectors and encouraging private investment that can generate sustainable jobs. He also highlighted the long-pending demand for regularisation of daily wagers, saying that thousands of families have been living with uncertainty despite years of service. He urged the administration to evolve a fair and time-bound policy to address their concerns. The demand for restoration of full statehood also figured prominently during the interaction. Bhalla said that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have repeatedly expressed their desire for restoration of democratic institutions and full statehood.

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, SEP 11

Under the banner of the UT Level Coordination Committee of NHM Employees J&K, National Health Mission employees across Jammu & Kashmir today observed the third and final day of the 72-hour strike-cum-protest, with continued participation and solidarity from employees belonging to various NHM programmes and categories.

However, in view of the absence of any positive response or concrete assurance from the Govt and concerned authorities. The Committee reiterated that despite years of dedicated service to the healthcare system of Jammu & Kashmir, the genuine concerns of NHM employees regarding job security, social security and other service-related issues continue to remain unresolved.

The protests continued at District and Block Head-



quarters across Jammu Division under the leadership of Provincial President, All JKNHMEA Jammu Division, Dr. Vikas Sharma, while NHM employees across Kashmir Division also continued their participation in the ongoing agitation under the leadership of Provincial President Kashmir Division Mr Muneer Ahmed Andrabi, besides UT President NTEP J&K Mr Musadiq Rafiq Parra.

NHM employees including Doctors, Paramedical and Management Staff, besides employees associated

with NTEP and other NHM schemes, participated in the protest programmes across the Union Territory.

On the third day of the agitation, employees once again raised their long-pending demands, including a comprehensive job policy, job security, golden handshake, retirement and social security benefits, EPF coverage for all eligible categories, loyalty benefits for left-out NHM employees, and other genuine service-related issues.

The Committee stated that the extension of the strike is not a decision taken lightly, but has become necessary in view of the absence of any concrete and positive response from the Govt. The employees maintained that the agitation is aimed at seeking a dignified and secure future for thousands of NHM employees who have rendered years of service to the public healthcare system of Jammu & Kashmir.