

CM okays blueprint of two modern jails

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CHANDIGARH: Punjab government approved the proposal and design for two modern self-sustained jails, christened as "Sudhar Ghars". The plan envisages industry linkages to ensure remunerative wages for prisoners, which would be sufficient to sustain jails and to fund prisoners' post-release rehabilitation.

Talking to mediapersons here on Wednesday after a nearly two-hour meeting with minister for jails Hira Singh Gambia, senior officers and special invitee Kiran Bedi, who had brought about a sea change in jail administration in Tihar jail, Delhi, Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal said such jails would come up in Kapurthala and Faridkot.

Since the new jails would be linked with industry, the prisoners would be assured minimum wages - half for maintenance of jail and the remainder to be deposited in the prisoner's account - and handed over along with interest on completion of sentence. "This would help in the detainees' rehabilitation after release," said Badal, adding that at present the prisoners get a token amount for their labour during detention.

Badal made no secret of his special concern for improvement in conditions of jails, saying he had changed their nomenclature during his earlier stint as CM. "I had laid the foundation of Ludhiana Central Jail in the late 1970s. Interestingly, I was also the first to be interned there during the Akali agitation," he added.

Dismissing speculations - triggered after he participated in the conglomeration of Third Front leaders at Ambala - that he was flirting with the Front, too, Badal said there was no question of his deserting the BJP and joining hands with the United National Progressive Alliance (UNPA). Badal had attended a rally on Tuesday along with former chief ministers Mulayam Singh Yadav, Om Prakash Chautala, Chandrababa Naidu, Madan Lal Khurana. And, photographs of all raising their hands seemed to suggest that they were taking a pledge to remain united.

Explaining his presence, Badal said it was an apolitical function on the birth anniversary of late Devi Lal. "For Devi Lal, I would go anywhere, even to Pakistan."

On Bhattal's nomination as state Congress president, Badal said he had already congratulated her. On whether this heralded an era of cooperation between two main parties in Punjab, Badal appeared dismissive, saying "Who cooperates with political rivals".

Justifying advancing of paddy procurement, though the prevailing market price was still higher than the minimum support price, the CM said they had requested for it, fearing that glut of paddy in the market would force farmers to distress sale.

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