

Vasundhara charms but talks tough



Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje having a meal at Gadariya Bas village in Rajasthan on Friday.

Hundreds of people, including women and children, surrounded Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje's cavalcade as it passed through the far-off villages in Chittorgarh district of south Rajasthan. She waves, stops to listen to the problems of 'her' people and gets down to make surprise visits at schools, hutments and other public facilities. Every time Ms. Raje gets down to make a surprise visit, it meant trouble for those whose performance was unsatisfactory.

On Friday, it was right from the Collector to a teacher at a local primary school in Bhadsoda who were at the receiving end. The Chief Minister made an unscheduled stop at the Primary Municipal School at Miraganj in Bhadsoda during her 'Sarkar Aapke Dwar' — government at your doorstep — visit in Udaipur Division. When a Grade-IV child in a school of just 16 students could not read a simple sentence in Hindi, Ms. Raje got visibly angry and called for the teacher. Ram Lal told her he drew Rs. 40,000 salary per month. "Now look, it a school of just 16 students and this teacher can't even teach them the basics! We have 1.5 lakh teachers in the State and this is the quality of education they give. We give bad education, we produce bad employees and we give bad administration, isn't it all inter-connected," she asked as she directed the District Collector to take action against those responsible for the bad state of affairs of the school.

Now, when the government talks of integration of schools, there is a hue and cry, Ms. Raje pointed out as she sought to silence the critics of her integration plan which involves merging of schools with few students and reorganisation of human resource.

At Gadariya Bas, Ms. Raje asked District Collector Ved Prakash to be in the field for four days to listen to the problems of the people and make on-the-spot assessments after the villagers complained that they had received only one instalment under the Chief Minister's BPL Housing Scheme. She ate food offered to her by the villagers and as a parting gift sanctioned a hand-pump. On the way to her next halt, she ordered removal of encroachments on the open drains.

Beginning her day with a visit to Saanwariyaji Temple, the Chief Minister's day ended at Raashmi village with a '*jan-sunwai*' (public hearing) where she heard the problems of the people for several hours. The complaints were accepted and forwarded for immediate redress.

"*Sarkar Aapke Dwar*" is a unique initiative started by the Rajasthan government during which the entire official machinery visits districts to take stock of the governance and get a feel of the issues faced by the people. So far, she has covered Bharatpur, Bikaner and Udaipur of a total of seven administrative divisions.