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APRIL 01-15, 2026

REACH LADAKH BULLETIN



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CJI Justice Surya Kant attends mega legal awareness camp in Leh

Emphasises access to justice, legal outreach, and empowerment of tribal communities in Ladakh



Photo Caption: Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant addressing the gathering during the Mega Camp and Awareness Programme.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, attended a Mega Camp and Awareness Programme on "Empowering Tribals through Legal Services and Defence Civil Action" at Rinchen Auditorium Hall, Leh, on March 28. The programme was organised by the Ladakh Legal Services Authority in collaboration with the 14 Corps of the Army.

The event was graced by the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena; Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli; Justice Sindhu Sharma, Executive Chairperson, LLSA; and other Hon'ble Judges of the High Court. Also present were Lt. Gen. Hitesh Bhalla, General Officer Commanding, 14 Corps; Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh, Dr. Ashish Kundra, IAS; Director General of Police, Ladakh, Mukesh Singh, IPS; senior officers of the UT Administration; members of the Bar; representatives of the armed forces; and other distinguished dignitaries.

Justice Sindhu Sharma, Judge of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Executive Chairperson of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority, welcomed the dignitaries and highlighted the significance of the programme in strengthening justice delivery mechanisms

in remote and far-flung areas. She also acknowledged the vital role of the Indian Army in facilitating access to legal services in Ladakh.

The Chief Justice of India expressed gratitude to the people of Ladakh and the UT Administration for the invitation. He described the inauguration of the District Court Complex at Leh and the establishment of the office of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority as significant milestones towards ensuring access to justice, particularly in a geographically vast and challenging region.

Emphasising the importance of robust judicial infrastructure, the Chief Justice observed that court complexes are not merely physical structures but institutions that must embody empathy, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to justice. He underscored that accessibility to justice must not be impeded by geographical barriers and noted that the newly inaugurated District Court Complex at Leh, along with the New Court Complex at Kargil, would substantially bridge this gap.

Noting that more than ninety percent of Ladakh's population belongs to Scheduled Tribes, the Chief Justice lauded the community for preserving the region's rich cultural heritage and traditions. He also commended the Indian Army for its dual role in safeguarding the nation's borders and contributing to the socio-economic development of the region through initiatives in education, healthcare, and community welfare.

Highlighting the role of paralegal volunteers, the Chief Justice emphasised their importance as a bridge between the legal system and the people, particularly in communicating in local languages and understanding cultural contexts. He called for greater outreach through legal aid camps in remote areas and stressed that legal services must extend beyond courtrooms to facilitate access to welfare schemes, pensions, and essential documentation.

...continues on page 2

Rising Drug Abuse in Leh raises concern; De-addiction centre emerges as Ray of Hope



Photo Caption: Representational image.

Stanzin Dasal

LEH: The growing menace of drug addiction in Leh has become a serious concern, with rising cases highlighting the urgent need for stronger intervention. While law enforcement agencies continue to crack down on substance abuse, the establishment of a de-addiction centre in the district is offering hope to those seeking recovery.

According to official data, 16 cases were registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in 2023, leading to 25 arrests. In 2024, 15 cases were recorded, with 22 arrests. The seizures during this period indicate an alarming trend, with authorities recovering significant quantities of narcotics.

In 2023, police seized 3 kg 124 gm of charas, 2 kg 429.05 gm of ganja, 12 gm of brown sugar, along with hundreds of banned capsules and 6.688 gm of semi-powder MDMA. The situation worsened in 2024, with seizures

rising to 5 kg 500.82 gm of charas and 8 kg 602 gm of ganja, in addition to tablets and capsules of banned substances.

Rigzin Sangdup JKPS, Additional SP district Leh, said that in 2025, 11 cases were registered with 23 arrests, and seizures included around 1 kg of charas, 1 kg of ganja, and 48 grams of heroin. In 2026, within just three months, five FIRs have already been registered, leading to the seizure of nearly 1 kg each of charas and ganja, along with 8 grams of heroin, and seven arrests.

"Compared to other states, the numbers may appear low, but considering Ladakh's sparse population, the data is concerning. The rise in drug addiction can also lead to an increase in other crimes," Sandup said, adding that Ladakh Police is making sustained efforts to curb the menace.

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Fortnightly News

CJI Justice Surya Kant attends mega legal awareness camp in Leh

...Continuity of page 1

He further underlined that the true essence of justice lies in instilling confidence in the legal system among the poorest and most marginalised sections of society. Encouraging mediation as an effective dispute resolution mechanism, he appreciated the traditional practices of Ladakh in resolving disputes amicably through dialogue and urged the Ladakh Legal Services Authority to strengthen mediation frameworks through capacity-building and training initiatives.

The Chief Justice of India also unveiled the Annual Newsletter 2025 of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority.

During the visit, Justice Surya Kant interacted with participants and visited stalls set up by Self-Help Groups under the Ladakh Rural Livelihood Mission and the Handloom Department, appreciating their efforts in promoting indigenous products and sustainable livelihoods.

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena termed the visit of a sitting Chief Justice of India to Ladakh as a historic milestone. He highlighted the unique challenges faced by the region due to its vast geography, remoteness, and demographic diversity, and emphasised the need for collective efforts to

strengthen the judicial system. He also apprised the gathering of key initiatives undertaken by the UT Administration, including the engagement of judicial personnel, deployment of paralegal volunteers, and the organisation of mobile legal aid clinics in remote areas.

Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli, described the occasion as historic and expressed confidence that the visit of the Chief Justice of India would significantly enhance legal awareness and empower tribal communities through improved access to justice. He also appreciated the leadership of the Lieutenant Governor and the continued support of the Indian Army in the development of Ladakh.

Lt. Gen. Hitesh Bhalla, General Officer Commanding, 14 Corps, briefed the gathering on the initiatives undertaken by the Fire and Fury Corps in coordination with the civil administration, highlighting efforts in border management as well as socio-economic development, including education, healthcare, environmental initiatives, and community outreach programmes.

A memento was presented to the dignitaries on behalf of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority.

Rising Drug Abuse in Leh raises concern; De-addiction centre emerges as Ray of Hope

...Continuity of page 1

Amid the growing crisis, the district de-addiction centre in Leh has emerged as a crucial support system for individuals battling substance abuse. Currently, eight individuals are undergoing treatment at the centre.

Patients undergoing recovery shared positive experiences, stating that they are receiving proper care, medication, and support. They expressed determination to overcome addiction and encouraged other youths to seek help.

The in-charge of the centre said that all facilities are provided free of cost. "Patients are given meals, timely medication, and are engaged in activities such as yoga, counselling, games, cultural programmes, and interactive sessions. We aim to create a family-like environment while ensuring complete confidentiality," the official said.

However, the centre continues to face challenges. With limited capacity, there is an urgent need for expansion to accommodate more patients. Experts have stressed the importance of strengthening infrastructure, creating separate wards for men and women, and introducing life-skills training programmes such as cooking, hospitality, and other employable skills to support rehabilitation.

The centre is also facing a shortage of staff, with outsourced personnel working round the clock despite limited financial resources.

Dr. Padma Angmo, Psychiatrist, described the de-addiction centre as a "ray of hope" for the region. She noted that awareness is gradually increasing and social stigma is declining, encouraging more individuals to come forward for treatment.

"Mental health and substance abuse are closely linked. In many cases, family issues and lack of emotional support push young people toward addiction," she said. She also emphasised the need for greater parental involvement, urging parents to closely monitor their children's behaviour, social circles, and emotional well-being.

Experts believe that tackling substance abuse requires a collective effort. While administrative measures and policing are essential, community participation is equally important.

In Leh, several socio-political organisations and NGOs are actively working to raise awareness and support affected individuals. Strengthening such initiatives, along with expanding rehabilitation facilities, is seen as key to addressing the growing challenge.

As Ladakh grapples with changing social dynamics, the fight against drug abuse will depend not only on enforcement but also on awareness, family support, and accessible rehabilitation—making the de-addiction centre a critical pillar in this ongoing effort.

L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena visits Sindhu Ghat, reviews preparations for Sindhu Mahakumbh

Emphasises ensuring pleasant and memorable experience for visitors and pilgrims



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena visited Sindhu Ghat on March 24 to review preparations for the upcoming first Sindhu Mahakumbh.

During the inspection, the Lieutenant Governor stressed the importance of providing a world-class experience to tourists and pilgrims expected to visit Ladakh for the event. He suggested aesthetic enhancements, including the placement of large decorative pots with local flowers along approach routes to improve the visual appeal of the Ghat.

LG Saxena directed the concerned departments to undertake a comprehensive makeover of the site. His directions included the removal of debris, repair and restoration of the Ghat, landscaping of the riverfront, improvement of approach roads, trimming of shrubs, and development of footpaths wherever feasible to ensure visitor safety and convenience. He also emphasized the need for adequate lighting, sanitation, and other essential amenities.

Reiterating Ladakh's immense natural beauty and tourism potential, the Lieutenant Governor under-

scored that well-planned development, environmental preservation, and robust civic infrastructure are key to strengthening tourism and improving the quality of life of the people.

He further highlighted the importance of public convenience, including the provision of adequate drinking water facilities and cleaning of riverbanks to ensure a pleasant and memorable experience for visitors and pilgrims during the Sindhu Mahakumbh.

The Lieutenant Governor also directed officials to ensure regular monitoring of ongoing works, with a clear emphasis on maintaining high standards of quality in civic infrastructure while preserving Ladakh's unique heritage and ecological balance.

Among those present during the visit were DGP Ladakh Mukesh Singh; Administrative Secretaries Sanjit Rodrigues and Shashanka Ala; Deputy Commissioner Leh, Romil Singh Donk; and other senior government officials.

Chief Justice of India inaugurates District Court Complex at Leh



Photo Caption: Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant inaugurating the newly constructed District Court Complex at Melong Thang, Leh.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, on March 28 inaugurated the newly constructed District Court Complex at Melong Thang, Leh, in the presence of Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, and Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli.

The ceremony was also attended by Justice Sindhu Sharma, Administrative Judge for District Leh, along with other judges of the High Court. Upon arrival, the Chief Justice of India was accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour, followed by a traditional welcome featuring a cultural troupe performance that showcased Ladakh's rich heritage. The programme included the unveiling

of a commemorative plaque, with the inscription formally read out by court officials.

A detailed 3D presentation highlighting the architectural design and facilities of the complex—including courtrooms, administrative offices, and residential quarters—was showcased. This was followed by an inspection of key facilities, including the Court of the Principal District and Sessions Judge, reflecting modern infrastructure aimed at strengthening the justice delivery system in the region.

On the occasion, the Chief Justice of India also inaugurated the newly constructed Ladakh Legal Services Authority (LLSA) building at Melong Thang. The dignitaries partici-

pated in a plantation drive within the LLSA premises.

Interacting with the media, Justice Surya Kant expressed satisfaction over the development of new judicial infrastructure and said the facilities would serve the people of Leh district for generations by improving access to legal services. He also announced that the District Court Complex at Kargil would be inaugurated during his ongoing visit.

The District Court Complex has been constructed at an estimated cost of ₹54.85 crore, while the Ladakh Legal Services Authority building has been built at an estimated cost of ₹5.70 crore.

The event was attended by several senior dignitaries, including the Chief Secretary of Ladakh, Director General of Police, Ladakh, General Officer Commanding, 14 Corps, Registrar General, and other senior civil and judicial officers.

Later, Justice Surya Kant also inspected the state-of-the-art High Court Guest House at Melong Thang.

The newly inaugurated District Court Complex marks a significant milestone in strengthening Ladakh's judicial infrastructure, enhancing accessibility, efficiency, and the overall delivery of justice in the region.

Ladakh wins medallion for excellence at IndiaSkills Regional competition 2025–26

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

NEW DELHI: In a proud moment for the Union Territory of Ladakh, Maqsuma Banoo, a B.Com 4th semester student of Government Degree College (GDC) Kargil and Beauty Skill Centre, GDC Kargil, has been awarded the Medallion for Excellence in the Beauty Therapy skill at the IndiaSkills Regional Competition 2025–26.

The Medallion for Excellence is conferred in each skill category to recognise competitors who demonstrate outstanding performance beyond the top three positions—gold, silver, and bronze. At the regional-level competition, around 330 participants from nine States and Union Territories competed across 63 skill trades.

Ladakh, participating for the first time, fielded six competitors across three skill trades—Beauty Therapy, Graphic Designing, and Fashion Technology. These participants were UT-level qualifiers, selected as the top two performers from each trade out of nearly 20 competitors at the UT-level IndiaSkills competition.

Securing a Medallion for Excellence in its debut regional participation marks a significant milestone for Ladakh, reflecting the growing

strength of its skilling ecosystem and the potential of its youth. This progress has been supported by the establishment of 16 skill centres across seven higher education institutions following the formation of the Union Territory.

Members of the Ladakh contingent expressed gratitude to the UT administration, including the Ladakh Skill Development Mission and Government Degree College Kargil, for their support through boot camp training at reputed institutes and for providing the opportunity to participate in the regional competition. They noted that participation itself proved to be a valuable learning experience, offering significant exposure to students.

Bhanu Prabha, Administrative Secretary, Technical Education and Skill Development/Higher Education and Mission Director, Ladakh Skill Development Mission, appreciated and felicitated the team upon their arrival in Leh. She reiterated that the UT administration will continue to support and nurture local talent, enabling the youth of Ladakh to excel and represent the region at national and international platforms. Under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Brig. (Dr.) B.D. Mishra

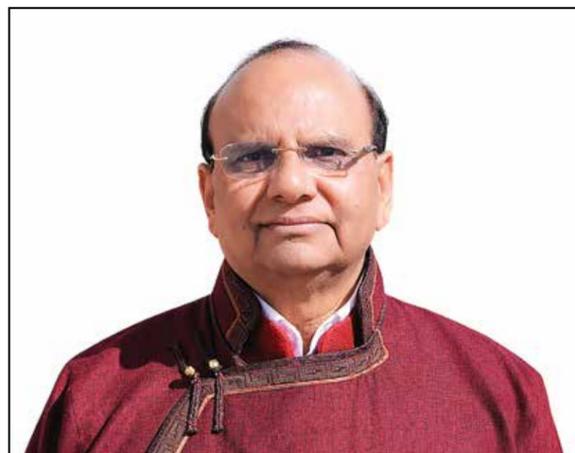


(Retd.) and the guidance of Chief Secretary Dr. Pawan Kotwal, the Ladakh Skill Development Mission (LSDM) plans to organise a UT-level annual skilling competition to encourage youth to pursue vocational and skill education with greater enthusiasm.

The IndiaSkills Competition, organised by the National Skill Development Corporation under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, is the country's premier platform for showcasing vocational and technical excellence.

L-G VK Saxena introduces employee-friendly reforms in vigilance clearance

Orders removal of Nautor land criterion to ensure timely promotions



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: In a landmark, employee-centric reform aimed at improving administrative efficiency and addressing long-standing concerns in Ladakh, Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena has ordered the removal of the nautor land criterion for granting vigilance clearance in service-related matters.

Under the revised framework, vigilance clearance will now be based on Government of India guidelines, the Central Civil Services Conduct Rules, and clearly defined objective parameters such as posting details, Annual Property Return (APR) statements, integrity certificates, antecedent reports from the Police Headquarters and Anti-Corruption

Bureau, as well as apportionment or deputation orders.

However, details related to nautor land will continue to be disclosed in annual property returns as per rules, but will no longer hinder the processing of vigilance clearance.

The reform is expected to provide significant relief to employees who previously faced delays in Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs), foreign travel permissions, retirement clearances, and other service-related matters due to this constraint.

Lieutenant Governor Saxena said the decision was taken after a com-

prehensive review, keeping in view the larger goal of efficient governance and improved public service delivery. "This reform reflects the Administration's commitment to fostering a fair, transparent, and employee-friendly governance environment. It will ensure that genuine employees are not subjected to unnecessary procedural hurdles and will help expedite administrative processes, enabling timely promotions and boosting workforce morale," he stated.

In line with this initiative, the Lieutenant Governor has also directed that all pending Departmental Promotion Committees be fast-tracked, facilitating career advancement for eligible employees and enabling fresh recruitment.

The issue had come to the notice of the Lieutenant Governor during his review of departmental functioning after assuming office on March 13. Several government employees had submitted representations highlighting difficulties in obtaining vigilance clearance, particularly due to issues related to nautor land, which adversely affected their career progression.

Taking cognisance of these concerns, the Lieutenant Governor directed the Chief Secretary to examine the matter and ensure a prompt and fair resolution. Acting on these directions, the Chief Secretary, in his capacity as Chief Vigilance Officer, conducted a comprehensive review and subsequently ordered the removal of the nautor land criterion.

Fortnightly News

Theatre takes centre stage in Leh on World Theatre Day



Photo Caption: Theatrical performance during the World Theater day.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: World Theatre Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm on March 27 at the Lotsava Auditorium in Leh, in an event organised by the Ladakh Theatre Organization (LTO) in collaboration with the Ladakh Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (LAACL), Leh.

The programme brought together theatre practitioners, cultural enthusiasts, artists, and members of the public to highlight the importance of theatre as a dynamic medium of artistic expression, social reflection, and cultural preservation.

President of the Youth Wing, Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA), Jigmet Raftan, attended the event as the Chief Guest, while President of the Women Wing, LBA, Kunzes Dolma Jawo, was the Guest of Honour.

Among others present were Deputy Secretary, LAACL Leh, Tsewang Paljor; Deputy Secretary, LAACL Kargil, Nazir Hussain; members of the Ladakh Theatre

Organization; theatre artists; and a large gathering of theatre enthusiasts.

Speaking on the occasion, Tsewang Paljor highlighted the significance of theatre in reflecting societal realities. He described theatre as a powerful tool for communication, awareness, and cultural expression, and stressed the need to preserve and promote theatrical traditions in Ladakh for future generations.

Founder of the Ladakh Theatre Organization, Mipham Otsal, also addressed the gathering and spoke about the importance of World Theatre Day. He emphasised the need to introduce theatre education in institutions to encourage youth participation in the performing arts and foster a deeper appreciation of Ladakh's storytelling and dramatic traditions.

The programme featured theatrical performances and musical presentations by artists of the Ladakh Theatre Organization, which were well received by the audience. The performances showcased local talent and highlighted the role of theatre in conveying meaningful social and cultural messages.

The organisers noted that World Theatre Day serves as an important platform to recognise the contributions of theatre practitioners and to strengthen the cultural fabric of society through artistic expression.

The celebration concluded on a vibrant and inspiring note, with participants appreciating the organisers' efforts to promote theatre culture and provide a platform for local talent in Ladakh.

L-G Saxena calls for traditional attire for commercial drivers in Ladakh

RTO issues circular mandating Ladakhi dress to promote cultural tourism



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: In pursuance of directions issued by Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, the Regional Transport Officer (RTO), Ladakh, has issued a circular mandating the wearing of traditional Ladakhi attire by all commercial drivers while on duty across the Union Territory, including Leh and Kargil.

The directive applies to all categories of commercial vehicles, including taxis, buses, tempo travellers, trucks, mini trucks, 207 vehicles, and other transport carriers. The initiative aims to promote Ladakh's rich cultural heritage and enhance the overall experience of tourists visiting the region.

The decision follows a meeting held on March 17 at the Lieutenant Governor's

Secretariat, during which a delegation of tourism stakeholders including members of the All Ladakh Tour Operators Association (ALTOA), All Ladakh Hotel and Guest House Association (ALHGHA), and All Kargil Travel Trade Association (AKTTA) met the Lieutenant Governor. During the interaction, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised the importance of preserving and promoting Ladakh's unique cultural identity. He suggested that drivers associated with the tourism sector adopt traditional attire, such as the goncha, while on duty as a reflection of pride in local culture and heritage.

Reiterating his vision, the Lieutenant Governor appealed to all commercial drivers to adhere to the directive in letter and spirit. He stressed that the initiative is not merely regulatory but also an opportunity for stakeholders to actively showcase Ladakh's vibrant traditions and cultural richness to visitors from across the country and the world.

He further noted that such initiatives would significantly contribute to strengthening cultural tourism, enhancing the authenticity of visitor experiences, and reinforcing Ladakh's identity as a unique and culturally rich destination.

Two-day training-cum-skill development programme on cultivation of medicinal plants begins in Leh



Photo Caption: During the two-day Training-cum-Skill Development Programme on the cultivation of medicinal plants.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: A two-day Training-cum-Skill Development Programme on the cultivation of medicinal plants commenced at the Trans Himalayan Herbal Garden of the National Institute of Sowa Rigpa (NISR), Leh, on March 23.

The programme was organised by the State Medicinal Plant Board (SMPB), Union Territory of Ladakh, in collaboration with the National Institute of Sowa Rigpa. It witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 80 attendees, including Amchis, farmers, and other stakeholders interested in medicinal plant cultivation. Dr. Dorji Galchan, Consultant, SMPB, highlighted the objectives of the programme and emphasized the importance of medicinal plants in sustainable healthcare and livelihood generation.

Dr. Tashi Thinlas, Director Health Services/AYUSH and Chief Executive Officer, SMPB, elaborated on the role of AYUSH systems in promoting traditional medicine and encouraged participants to adopt scientific approaches to medicinal

plant cultivation.

Dr. Padma Gurmet, Director, National Institute of Sowa Rigpa, spoke on the significance of the Sowa Rigpa system and stressed the need for conservation and cultivation of medicinal plants, particularly in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

The session also featured the unveiling of a calendar by the State Medicinal Plant Board, aimed at promoting awareness about medicinal plants.

Dr. Tsewang Rinchen delivered a lecture on the cultivation of medicinal plants, providing insights into the diversity and importance of medicinal flora in high-altitude regions. Skalzang Lamo presented on the significance of ethno-medicinal plants and cultivation methods in cold desert regions, highlighting the integration of traditional knowledge with scientific practices.

A guest lecture was delivered by Amchi Sonam Tundup on Carthamus tinctorius (Palkur), focusing on its uses and cultivation techniques.

The programme also included the felicitation of speakers in recognition of their contributions. A hands-on session on the cultivation of Carthamus tinctorius (Palkur) provided participants with practical exposure, followed by a field visit for on-site learning.

An open discussion (Q&A session) was held, during which participants actively interacted with experts, clarified doubts, and shared their experiences.

Sham Eagles clinch Gold as ASMITA League 2026 concludes



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The ASMITA League 2026 concluded successfully at the NDS Ice Hockey Stadium in Leh, marked by an enthusiastic closing ceremony on March 27. The event was graced by the Chief Guest, Sangita Saxena, First Lady of UT Ladakh. The programme commenced with the National Anthem and the National Song, also marking the celebration of 150 years of "Vande Mataram."

On the occasion, Sangita Saxena congratulated the winning teams and participants for their outstanding performances and sportsmanship. She appreciated the efforts of the athletes, their families, and coaches, and commended the Youth Services & Sports Department for successfully organising the

league. She lauded the development of ice rink facilities and assured her continued support for the promotion of sports in Ladakh. She also expressed pride in the achievements of Ladakhi girls at national and international levels. During the event, the final match of the ASMITA Ice Hockey tournament was played between Sham Eagles and Lalok, with Sham Eagles emerging victorious by scoring two goals, while Lalok remained scoreless.

The closing ceremony concluded with the distribution of prizes to the winners. In the Ice Hockey competition, Sham Eagles secured the gold medal, Lalok won the silver medal, and Team Kharu bagged the bronze medal. Prizes were also distrib-

uted to winners in speed skating and figure skating events.

Administrative Secretary, Youth Services & Sports, Moses Kunzang, expressed gratitude for the Chief Guest's presence and highlighted the department's commitment to promoting winter sports in Ladakh. He stated that more such tournaments would be organised in the coming days to encourage greater participation of girls in sports. He also elaborated on the objectives of the ASMITA initiative, which aims to empower women through sports.

The event witnessed active participation from athletes and sports enthusiasts, marking a successful conclusion to the ASMITA League 2026 in Leh.

Chief Secretary reviews development needs in Nyoma border villages

Ashish Kundra reviews infrastructure, healthcare, and livelihood issues



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary of UT Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, accompanied by Administrative Secretary, School Education, Bhanu Prabha, visited Tsaga village, where he interacted with nomadic families and Pashmina growers.

During the visit, he witnessed a demonstration of Pashmina combing and listened to the issues and concerns raised by the public. These included the development of agricultural and pasture land, improvement of Loma-Tsaga road connectivity,

upgradation of the Primary Health Centre (PHC), and construction of a residential hostel.

He later visited Demchok, the last village of India along the Indo-China border, where he held discussions with Army officials on strengthening infrastructure, enhancing employment opportunities, and improving education and healthcare to make the region more vibrant.

The Chief Secretary also addressed a public gathering at the Community Hall

in Demchok, where villagers raised various developmental issues, including the need for an ambulance service, availability of a medical doctor, and other essential facilities. He gave a patient hearing to all concerns and assured that genuine demands would be taken up on priority.

He also visited the Kailash Observatory Post (OP) at Demchok to review the situation. En route, Kundra interacted with members of the Tibetan refugee community at Dungi and Koyul villages and reviewed their developmental concerns. On the return journey, residents of Hanle village submitted a memorandum highlighting their issues.

The two-day tour concluded with a comprehensive assessment of developmental needs across the Nyoma Sub-Division, with the administration assuring that necessary action would be taken at the earliest.

Adequate stock of Petroleum and Natural Gas available in Ladakh, Says Chief Secretary



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Following a meeting with the Secretary, Petroleum, and representatives of Oil Marketing Companies on March 25, the Chief Secretary of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, reassured the public that an assessment of petroleum and natural gas reserves has been conducted, confirming that more than 60 days of sufficient stock is currently available. He urged people not to pay heed to

rumours or misinformation and discouraged panic buying.

Addressing concerns about black marketing and diversion, the Chief Secretary warned that strict action would be taken under the Essential Commodities Act against anyone found involved in such activities.

He also responded to concerns regarding the shortage of LPG. The Secretary, Petroleum, informed

that as per existing norms, domestic consumers will receive LPG supplies within 25 days. For commercial establishments, the allocation has been increased from 20 percent to 40 percent, with efforts underway to raise it further to 50 percent.

The Chief Secretary further stated that a meeting will be held with all LPG distributors in Leh and Kargil to develop a proper mechanism for fair distribution among commercial establishments. He added that schools and hospitals will be treated under the domestic category instead of the commercial category.

Reiterating his appeal, the Chief Secretary urged the public to avoid panic buying, assuring that adequate stock of petroleum and natural gas is available across the Union Territory.

LG V.K Saxena launches Indus River Green Corridor in Ladakh

1,000 native saplings planted along riverbank; initiative aims to restore fragile cold desert ecosystem

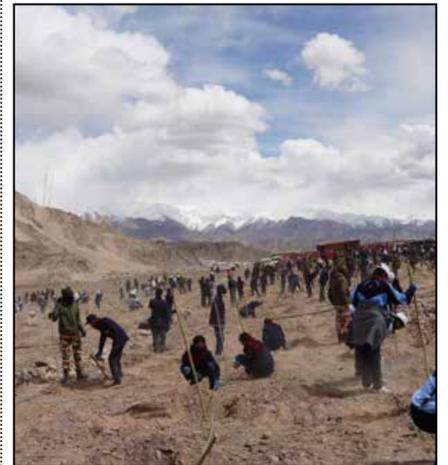


Photo Caption: Plantation drive at Spituk Pharka during the launch of the Indus River Green Corridor Eco-Restoration Plantation.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday launched the Indus River Green Corridor Eco-Restoration Plantation at Spituk Pharka on March 23, marking a significant step towards restoring the ecological integrity of the Indus riverbanks in Ladakh's fragile cold desert ecosystem.

The initiative, described as a first-of-its-kind Cold Desert Riverbank Restoration Project in India, aims to create green buffers along the Indus and enhance environmental sustainability in the region. As part of the drive, nearly 1,000 saplings of indigenous species including Oleaster, Sea buckthorn, Indian Willow, Black Poplar, and White Willow were planted across one hectare of riverbank land. The effort was made possible through the collaboration of civil administration, defence and paramilitary forces, police, and local communities. Notably, Spituk Monastery contributed one hectare of land for the plantation.

In addition, another 1,000 saplings of Cherry Blossom and Apricot were planted along roadsides in Leh city to enhance its green cover and aesthetic appeal.

The programme was organised by the Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment in collaboration with Spituk Monastery and the University of Ladakh. It witnessed active participation from students, local residents, and officials, showcasing a model of collective action and convergence.

Describing the occasion as historic, Saxena said that with community support, the project could evolve into a global model for high-altitude river ecosystem restoration. He termed the initiative a major step towards sustainable development in Ladakh and highlighted its potential to address pressing ecological challenges.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised the deep interconnection between nature, culture, and development, noting that forests and rivers are integral to Ladakh's identity and long-term sustainability.

Referring to the vision of Narendra Modi, he reiterated India's commitment to combating land degradation and desertification, and achieving the national target of restoring 2.6 crore hectares of degraded land by 2030. He expressed confidence that Ladakh would play a key role in this mission.

Highlighting the importance of community participation, Saxena lauded Spituk Monastery's contribution as an example of collaborative governance. He also shared insights from similar successful greening initiatives in Udaipur and Delhi.

Calling the Indus River Green Corridor a "civilisational project," the LG said it goes beyond a government programme and represents a broader vision of balancing development with environmental conservation. He also urged wider adoption of the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign in Ladakh.

Drawing attention to Ladakh's forest cover currently less than one percent he termed the situation concerning and set a target to increase it to five per cent within the next two years. He outlined the ecological benefits of such efforts, including reduced wind velocity, prevention of soil erosion, improved biodiversity, enhanced micro-climatic stability, and increased oxygen levels.

The LG also stressed the adoption of innovative techniques such as gravity-based solar submersible strip irrigation and drip irrigation systems to optimise water use in plantation activities.

Encouraging youth participation, he urged young people to take the lead in sustainability efforts and contribute actively to environmental conservation. He also reiterated his vision of transforming Ladakh into a premier global tourist destination by leveraging its natural and ecological wealth.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor released a special postal cover and felicitated individuals and organisations contributing to environmental conservation, including "Go Green, Go Organic," Range Officer Stanzin Gelek, and Namgyal. Winners of a hackathon were also honoured.

Among those present were Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC Kargil, Mohd Jaffer Akhoo; Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra; GOC 14 Corps Lt Gen Hitesh Bhalla; DGP Ladakh Mukesh Singh; District Principal and Sessions Judge Spalzes Angmo; senior officials of the Indian Army, ITBP, and BRO; former MP Ladakh Jamyang Tsering Namgyal; and Abbot of Spituk Monastery Ven. Lobzang Angchuk, along with representatives from civil society and a large number of students.

In Focus:

Aryan Valley Festivals: Preserving Tradition and Identity

By Tundup Palgias Tambapa (Teacher)



The Aryan Valley—comprising villages such as Darchik, Garkone, Dha, Byama and Hanu—is home to one of the region's most distinctive Indo-Aryan communities, considered among the earliest inhabitants of Ladakh. Often referred to as Brokpa or Drokpa (Dardic Aryan), the people have preserved unique linguistic, ritual and social traditions through the ages. Festivals here are not merely events; they are acts of collective prayer, kinship affirmation and cultural preservation—each one a living chapter in the story of a civilisation that has endured across millennia.

Six major celebrations mark the Aryan calendar, each rooted in the rhythms of nature, kinship and devotion. Losar welcomes the New Year with fire, song and rites of passage. Spetses honours paternal kin through feasting and genealogical songs. Bee blesses the first ploughing and invokes protection for the young. Bono Nah, the “great harvest,” rotates every three years among three villages in a celebration of

abundance and shared heritage. Manthana gives thanks for the millet harvest in Darchik. Together, Snolha and Nah frame the summer—the first marking the movement of livestock to high pastures, the second the tasting of the season's first barley.

At the heart of every festival stands the Labdagpa, the village priest. His hereditary role is entrusted with the worship of the village deity (Boonu Lhah) and the performance of rituals that sanctify each celebration. Before any festival, he undergoes physical and spiritual purification—abstaining from certain foods, avoiding contact with other communities and wearing traditional white attire. His actions are believed to maintain the sacred boundary between the human and divine realms, ensuring that prayers are heard and blessings bestowed. In the past, the opening of festivities included the sacrifice of a baby goat; today, in keeping with the community's Buddhist practices, that custom has been abandoned, though the ritual structure and symbolic distribution of food remain as echoes of older traditions. From Losar to Bono Nah, from Bee to Manthana, the Labdagpa's presence weaves a thread of continuity, connecting each festival to the spiritual heritage of the Aryan community of Ladakh.

Losar – The New Year Festival

Spanning over a week, Losar in the Aryan Valley follows a rhythm distinct from the Tibetan style Losar celebrated elsewhere in Ladakh. The festival begins with Cha Phetispa, a day of fire throwing. Male members from every household gather at Dumalsa, a designated open ground, carrying torches or flaming bundles. The fire procession is believed to purify the village and drive away misfortune. Throughout the night, participants sing a prescribed sequence of traditional songs known as Sildusi Goi; completing the entire set is considered essential for the ritual's success.

The following day, men attend the Larah ceremony, a worship ritual dedicated to the Phaspoondeity, associated

with protection and lineage. Meanwhile, women decorate their homes and prepare for Tsesphag—a day of visiting every household. During Tsesphag, community members exchange Mala greetings, which are more than simple salutations: elders place their hands on the heads of younger visitors, imparting blessings for health and prosperity. At each house, special dishes—often traditional multigrain breads and butter tea—are served by the elder members of the household.

A particularly distinctive day is LopiNakhiliso, which honour the Dinpas—individuals who have reached an age that is a multiple of twelve (12, 24, 36, and so on). Reaching such an age is seen as a spiritual as well as personal milestone. The Dinpas are escorted from their homes in ceremonial processions complete with khataks (ceremonial scarves), specific songs, and ritual gestures, mirroring the formality of a wedding and symbolising a “rebirth” into a new stage of life. They are led to a central gathering place, where the village head singer guides the performance of Dinpa songs.

Over the next three to four days, the Dinpas gather in traditional attire adorned with khataks. Male Dinpas perform the Prasula dance, wielding swords in a display that evokes both martial heritage and protective blessings. They also showcase the Nimaskore dance, a more graceful, coordinated counterpart. The songs and dances are led by the village head singer, an oral repository of verses that can number in the hundreds. The final day of Losar, Lhah Skyl (“seeing off the deity”), closes the sacred circuit. The community believes that deities have attended the celebrations as honoured guests. A short comedic or allegorical play—unique to each village—is performed, followed by Lhah Skyl songs that formally bid the deities farewell, bringing the New Year festivities to a close.

Poetic reflections: Losar: When the Year Turns

When winter stars are newly cast,
The torches wake the valley's past.
From Dumalsa, fire lines race
Old songs outrun the dark they face.
All night the verses, one by one,
Sildusi Goi till night is gone.

Then mothers dress the doorways wide,
And blessings flow from elder's hand,
Mala that steadies, like the land.
Twelve turns the year, the chosen rise

the Dinpas clad in khatak white.

With Prasula, with sword, they make us whole,
As ancestors walk into the light.

On the last day, the unseen guests
Who feasted in our songs and rest
Are bid farewell with Lhah Skyl
The old year folds, the new has sway.

Spetses – Celebrating Paternal Kin

Spetses spans three days and is dedicated to the paternal side of the family. Relatives are invited as guests of honour, and the community organises dances and songs reserved exclusively for this occasion. In the kinship structure of the Aryan Valley, maternal and paternal relations have distinct ceremonial roles; Spetses reaffirms patrilineal bonds, and the songs sung during this time often contain genealogical references, reinforcing family history through oral tradition. It is a time of feasting, dance and the joyful renewal of kinship ties.

Poetic Reflections: Spetses: Feast of the Father's Line

Now let the fathers' houses call,
The lineage that held us all.
We lay the hearth, we lift the door,
And sing the names of those before.
Each verse a branch, each dance a root,
The steps are old, the rhythm true.
For in this valley, stone and stream,
The father's line is half the dream.
They come with stories, come with bread,
Three days the kin are guests and fed.
And when the last tune fades to still,
Our Aryan bond is iron on the hill

Bee – The Ploughing Festival

The Bee festival marks the beginning of the agricultural cycle. The Labdagpa initiates cultivation in the Beebyas fields. Infants and children up to around thirteen years of age called Sumpa have sattu (roasted barley flour, known locally as phatik) smeared on their faces, a practice believed to bestow strength and safeguard against illness.

Accompanied by juniper smoke and the Larnah (a tune specific to the deities of cultivation), the Labdagpa ploughs the field in an anticlockwise circle a direction

...continues on page 6

The World of

Juniors

April Fools' Day

The day has been observed for centuries, but its true origins are unknown. April Fools' Day is also known as All Fools' Day and is observed in several countries on the first day of April.

It is one of the most lighthearted days of the year and is celebrated by playing practical jokes and spreading hoaxes. The jokes and their victims are called “April fools.”

According to some historians, it was first celebrated in 1852 when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, and some say that it is related to the turn of the seasons.

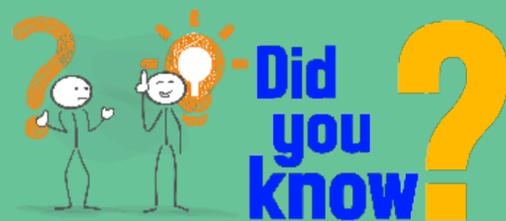
According to the most prevalent concept, the Romans in ancient times started celebrating the new year in April, while in medieval Europe, on March 25, the New Year was celebrated as a festival. In 1852, Pope Gregory VIII established the Gregorian calendar (the present valid calendar), based on which the new year started in January.

This calendar was first accepted by France, but according to Janushruti, several people in Europe did not accept this calendar and

were not aware of it. As a result, those who celebrated the new year according to the new calendar were considered fools by those who celebrated the new year in April according to the old calendar, and the trend of April Fool's Day or Fool's Day has grown since then.

Folktales associated with April Fool's Day

A long time ago, there was a funny king named “Moxer” in Greece. One day, he dreamed that an ant had swallowed him alive. When his sleep broke in the morning, he started laughing loudly, remembering his dream. When his wife asked him the reason for laughing, he said that “At night I saw in my dream that an ant had swallowed me alive.” Hearing this, the queen also started laughing. Then an astrologer told the king that this dream means “you should live with the day laughing and joking” and that it is the first day of April. So from that day on 1st April, every year was celebrated as a day full of laughter.



1. Water might not be wet. This is because most scientists define wetness as a liquid's ability to maintain contact with a solid surface, meaning that water itself is not wet, but can make other objects wet.

2. Most people stroke cats the wrong way. Research shows they often just tolerate it for the food and attention. The safest spots? Under the chin, cheeks and base of the ears. The worst? Their belly and the base of their tail – touch there and you're more likely to annoy them than bond with them.

3. A chicken once lived for 18 months without a head. Mike the chicken's incredible feat was recorded back in the 1940s in the USA. He survived as his jugular vein and most of his brainstem were left mostly intact, ensuring just enough brain function remained for survival. In the majority of cases, a headless chicken dies in a matter of minutes.

4. All the world's bacteria stacked on top of each other would stretch for 10 billion light-years. Together, Earth's 0.001mm-long microbes could wrap around the Milky Way over 20,000 times.

5. The world's oldest dog lived to 29.5 years old. While the median age a dog reaches tends to be about 10-15 years, one Australian cattle dog, “Bluey”, survived to the ripe old age of 29.5.

6. The world's oldest cat lived to 38 years and three days old. Creme Puff was the oldest cat to ever live.

7. The Sun makes a sound but we can't hear it. In the form of pressure waves, the Sun does make a sound. The wavelength of the pressure waves from the Sun is measured in hundreds of miles, however, meaning they are far beyond the range of human hearing.

8. Most maps of the world are wrong. On most maps, the Mercator projection – first developed in 1569 – is still used. This method is wildly inaccurate and makes Alaska appear as large as Brazil and Greenland 14 times larger than it actually is. For a map to be completely accurate, it would need to be life-size and round, not flat.

9. You can actually die laughing. And a number of people have, typically due to intense laughter causing a heart attack or suffocation. Comedy shows should come with a warning.

Ants don't have lungs. They instead breathe through spiracles, nine or ten tiny openings, depending on the species.

SoulSpeak

Dr. P.P. Wangchuk

My journey to the world of AI



I am far from being anywhere near the world of AI (Artificial Intelligence), but I have a deep interest in ‘befriending’ it. The first step has been already taken, and I hope I will have patience enough to go through the journey to a reasonably good stage.

As I had already told some of you, the first thing I have done is to read and digest an introductory book, AI – MADE SIMPLE. I find it interesting but somewhat difficult to understand in certain cases. A dear buddy who calls herself an AI expert says that I would “understand everything very soon.” That is quite a good encouragement. I have full faith in her assurance, and somewhat in my own ability!

I must admit that I don't need to learn about AI to have a good job. I don't need a job, but I want to be a ‘little expert’ for my sheer joy and curiosity, and to make life easier. The more I read about AI, the more I get fascinated.

Though I don't want a job in any AI-based project, there are many areas of your daily life wherein you can apply AI for making your life and its journey more interesting and shining. Some of the uses that I am somewhat familiar are: AI powered trading algorithms and personalized financial advice could be of great help for many of us who want their money earn more money while we are sleeping.

And then who can remain away from personalised learning and automated grading that AI does so quickly and efficiently. Similarly, Amazon, Netflix et al can give you good content with the help of AI.

You can add one more beautiful trait of AI: It detects patterns and anomalies to predict and prevent cyber threats. And then you have also systems like Alexa, Think Siri etc. to understand voice commands in order to make your life much easier and livelier.

AI also plays a ‘super-doctor's’ role in disease diagnoses, personalised medicines besides helping in predictive analytics to improve patients' outcomes.

Another wonder: A self-driving car is already at your doorstep. Besides, you can buy a beautiful robot-girl as your kitchen mate!

One can go on adding many more such uses. Mankind is blessed!

Courtesy: WongWorld

The writer is a New Delhi-based Editor-at-large, columnist and professional speaker.

Fortnightly News

In Conversation with Kunzes Angmo: Documenting Ladakhi Food Traditions

Q. Can you tell us about your early life, what inspired you to pursue traditional Ladakhi cuisine, and how your journey began?

I was not born or raised in Ladakh I was born in Srinagar. My family comes from a professional background, with many members, including my parents, working in fields like medicine and administration. My mother, in particular, spent a significant part of her career on deputation outside Jammu and Kashmir, in places like Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. As a result, we grew up moving between different regions.

Despite living away from Ladakh, my mother was very intentional about keeping us connected to our roots through food. Traditional Ladakhi dishes were a regular part of our meals, and in hindsight, I realise that this was her way of preserving our identity and sense of belonging.

My grandfather also played an important role in shaping this connection. He ensured that his children grew up eating simple, traditional Ladakhi food even dishes that were not commonly consumed in urban settings. That emphasis on food as a cultural anchor stayed within the family and eventually reached my generation.

I moved to Ladakh only after my marriage. I married into a farming and hospitality family one that had established one of the earliest hotels in the region. This gave me my first exposure to food at a commercial level. At the same time, my husband's family follows a deeply traditional lifestyle. They continue to grow their own food, rear cattle, and sustain a system closely tied to the land. Living in such an environment was transformative for me because it was very different from how I had grown up.

Over time, I began to reflect more deeply on identity especially during my years studying in Delhi and later through my visits to Ladakh. I realised that Ladakhi cuisine was often not seen as aspirational. At weddings and social gatherings, it was usually replaced by North Indian or Kashmiri dishes. Food, after all, is closely linked to perception and status, and somewhere along the way, Ladakhi cuisine had been sidelined.

This realisation led me to research trans-Himalayan food identity around 2018. During this process, I discovered that there was very little documentation on Ladakhi food traditions. Much of my research happened during the COVID period, which made it even more challenging. Conversations had to be conducted over the phone, and it was often difficult to find people willing to share knowledge.

Interviewed by Stanzin Dasal



MESSAGE TO THE READERS

“Food is more than sustenance it is a reflection of our identity, culture, and history. As traditions evolve, it is important to appreciate and preserve the stories behind what we eat. By valuing local cuisines, we keep our heritage alive for future generations.”

That was when I understood the importance of not just documenting, but also representing Ladakhi cuisine authentically. What we often see today is a diluted version of the food culture. There is a tendency to label Tibetan dishes as Ladakhi, which risks erasing the uniqueness of our own culinary heritage.

This understanding led me to begin curating small, narrative-driven dining experiences centred on authentic Ladakhi cuisine. These are intimate, multi-course meals where food becomes a medium to discuss history, ecology, religion, and climate. For me, this work is not just about cooking—it is about reclaiming identity and preserving heritage.

Q. How did you learn the art of Ladakhi cooking—through family traditions or formal training?

My learning has been entirely rooted in lived experience. Whenever people ask me to train others in Ladakhi cuisine, I often tell them that the richest knowledge already exists within their own homes. Our elders carry generations of culinary wisdom, and they are the most authentic teachers.

In my case, I learned from my grandmother, my in-laws, and by closely observing family practices. My mother, though deeply connected to Ladakhi food, had a demanding career as a doctor and public health specialist, so she wasn't always in the kitchen. My grandmother, however, was a strong influence. She didn't teach in a formal way, but she guided and instructed me. She comes from the Srangar family, which historically had ties with Tibet.

I am married into the Kalon family, which has historical connections with Central Asia, particularly regions like Khotan and Yarkand. These are not distant histories they are lived narratives passed down through generations. My grandmother would recall how families like hers hosted Yarkandi traders in Leh. The Yarkandi pulao that I cook today is based on her memory of how it was prepared when she was a child something incredibly rare and valuable today.

In traditional households like the Kalon family, food practices remain deeply rooted. Even today, meals follow generational rhythms breakfasts alternating between dishes like kholak and khambir, made from local, homegrown ingredients. Food is not occasional or performative; it is part of everyday life, deeply tied to the land.

For me, perspective played an important role. Although I am Ladakhi, I grew up largely outside Ladakh. So when I returned

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Fortnight Highlights



Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena today visited the Hall of Fame and laid a wreath at the war memorial, paying homage to the brave soldiers who laid down their lives in the service of the nation.

The Lieutenant Governor was received by General Officer Commanding (GOC) 14 Corps Lt Gen Hitesh Bhalala.



Acting on the directions of Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, a comprehensive cleanliness and urban improvement drive was launched in Leh city on March 20 with renewed vigour and commitment. The initiative aims to transform Leh into one of the cleanest, most organised, and tourist-friendly cities in the country.



Government Degree College Khaltsi marked the 150th anniversary of the national song "Vande Mataram" with a solemn and intellectually enriching programme, reflecting on its historical, cultural, and nationalist significance.



Chief Secretary of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, chaired an interactive meeting with young achievers from across the region in Leh, with participants from Kargil joining virtually on March 19.



Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor (CEC), LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, along with Member of Parliament from Ladakh, Mohammad Haneefa Jan, and Executive Councillor, LAHDC Kargil, Zakir Hussain, called on Union Minister for Home Affairs Amit Shah in New Delhi on March 18 and submitted a detailed memorandum highlighting key developmental issues concerning Kargil district of the Union Territory of Ladakh.



A group of Indian Information Service (IIS) probationers interacted with Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor, Shashanka Ala, at the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat, as part of their Bharat Darshan programme. The delegation comprised 24 Officer Trainees of IIS Group 'B' currently undergoing their Foundation Course at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), New Delhi, under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.



Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor (CEC), LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, visited Kargil Bhawan in New Delhi to review the progress of ongoing works.



An enrollment drive was successfully conducted at the Community Hall in Disket, Nubra, aimed at encouraging parents to enroll their children in government schools. The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from villagers, the Goba (village head), members of Ama Tsogspa, and representatives of various local organisations, marking a significant step towards strengthening government schools in the region.

Fortnightly News

In Focus: Aryan Valley Festivals: Preserving Tradition and Identity

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associated in local cosmology with life, renewal and the warding off of negative forces. Male participants and their children stand within the circle, symbolically placing the next generation at the heart of the community's sustenance. A traditional dance involving the Sumpas follows the ploughing, and the celebrations continue for three more days with songs and dances that unite the community in hope for a fruitful season.

Poetic Reflections: Bee: Blessing the Furrow

Before the ploughshare breaks the clay,
the children stand within the sway.
Sattu on the forehead glows,
the old protection that the valley knows.
Juniper rises in braids of smoke;
the Labdagpa begins the chant—
Larnah that coaxes earth awake.
He walks the circle, anticlockwise,
with sons held safe within the ties.
Three days the dance goes round the field,
the promise that the soil will yield.
In every furrow, shallow and deep,
a hope the Aryan clan will keep.

Bono Nah – Festival of Grand Harvest

Bono Nah means “the greatest harvest” in the Dardiarya language. This festival lasts over five days and involves the singing of all the Bono Nah songs a complete cycle of verses that must be performed in their entirety. It is celebrated alternately every three years, rotating among the villages of Dha, Garkone and Ganoks (lying across the Line of Control in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir). This rotational tradition reflects the deep interconnectedness of the Aryan settlements, which share lineage, language and ritual heritage.

Before the festival begins, the Labdagpa (village priest) undergoes three days of purification, remaining isolated from the rest of the community. This period of retreat mirrors the sacred preparation observed for other major festivals, reinforcing the priest's role as a mediator between the human and divine realms. When the purification is complete, he is escorted to the gathering place with the Larnah a musical tune dedicated to the village deity accompanied by specific songs reserved exclusively for this occasion. The five days that follow are filled with communal singing, dance and feasting, honouring the abundance of the harvest and the blessings of the land.

Poetic Reflections: Bono Nah: The Great Harvest

Every third year, the songs return
the verses that the elders earn.
From Dha to Garkone, the summons wide,
across the line where Aryan reside.
Three days the Labdagpa waits apart,

the sacred held within the heart.

Then Larnah rises, the escort song
the great harvest calls, and we belong.
Five days the circle holds its peace,
the songs complete, their echoes cease.
For when the last note fades to air,
the valley stores its wealth in prayer.

Manthana – The Millet Harvest

Manthana is celebrated in the village of Darchik during the last week of October each year. This festival marks the harvesting of the final crop of the season: millet. Lasting three days, Manthana involves singing all the songs associated with the festival—a repertoire that praises the deities of Aryan, acknowledging their role in sustaining the land and its people.

Unlike Bono Nah, which rotates among villages, Manthana is an annual celebration unique to Darchik, yet its themes of gratitude and reverence echo across the valley. The millet harvest, coming at the close of the agricultural year, represents both completion and thanksgiving, and the songs performed during these three days weave together devotion, seasonal reflection and communal joy.

Poetic Reflections: Manthana: The Millet's Gift

In Darchik, when October nears,
the millet fields in gold appear.
Three days the songs of praise arise
to deities in autumn skies.
The year's last crop, the season's close,
each verse a vow, each note a rose.
They sing of mountains and flowing streams,
and bless the land where Aryan dreams.

Snolha and Nah: Moving the Herds; Blessing the Grain

Two festivals mark the rhythms of the pastoral and agricultural year during the summer season.

Snolha celebrates the shifting of domestic animals to the upper pastures. This movement is a significant moment in the annual cycle, as livestock are taken to higher grazing grounds where they remain through the warm months. After Snolha, no animals are kept in the main village—a temporary separation that allows both the fields and the settlement to rest. The songs sung during this time are light and seasonal, evoking the freshness of summer and the beauty of alpine meadows.

Nah follows as the counterpoint, marking the harvesting of the first crop barley. The festival lasts three days, and its central ritual involves the community tasting the first new crop in every household. This act of tasting is both a celebration of abundance and a gesture of gratitude, ensuring

that the first fruits are shared collectively. The songs of Nah are filled with imagery of summer: flowers in bloom, the warmth of the sun and the ripening fields.

Together, Snolha and Nah frame the summer season as a time of movement, growth and renewal when the community tends to both its herds and its fields, singing the land into abundance.

Poetic Reflections: Snolha and Nah: The Moving and the Mending

When summer sends the herds to roam,
Snolha sings of peaks and pastures above.
The village empties of the flock,
the songs are clear as mountain rock.
Then Nah returns when barley bends
the first new grain, the circle mends.
From house to house, the taste goes round,
the first fruits hallow all the ground.
One marks the going, one the yield
the summer songs of harvest and field.
In every verse, our Aryan Valley knows:
the land provides, the spirit grows.

Preserving the Intangible

The festivals of the Aryan Valley are more than annual observances they are expressions of cultural resilience. Closely tied to the Dardiarya language (a form of Shina), now spoken by few elders, they preserve ritual knowledge and tradition. Ongoing efforts to document these practices ensure that this living heritage of language, identity and indigenous knowledge endures.

About the Author

Tundup Palgias Tambapa is a teacher and scholar from the Aryan Valley of Ladakh, born and raised in a community where ancient traditions still breathe. A dedicated preserver of Aryan heritage, he is not only an educator but also a folklore singer and storyteller, having collected numerous oral narratives, songs, and rituals passed down through generations. His deep connection to his homeland and its living culture infuses this work with authenticity and reverence. Through his writing, he seeks to document and celebrate the festivals that sustain the identity and spirit of the Aryan Valley.

The author is a teacher and scholar from the Aryan Valley of Ladakh. A dedicated preserver of Aryan heritage, he is not only an educator but also a folklore singer and storyteller, having collected numerous oral narratives, songs, and rituals passed down through generations. You can send your views and comment at tspalgias@gmail.com.

In Conversation with Kunzes Angmo: Documenting Ladakhi Food Traditions

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after marriage, I experienced these traditions almost as an outsider observing them with fresh eyes. I began asking questions, documenting practices, and understanding the deeper context behind everyday food.

A particularly formative phase was my time in Nubra after becoming a mother. That is when my relationship with food became more intentional. During harsh winters, when fresh produce is scarce, you rely on traditional knowledge sun and shade drying, root cellaring, and seasonal preservation. Ensuring nutritious food for my child made me realise how relevant and sophisticated these systems are.

Before that, I had always eaten and even cooked Ladakhi food, but I hadn't reflected deeply on it. It was only through lived experience that I began to truly understand its meaning.

For me, Ladakhi cuisine is not just about recipes it is about memory, survival, ecology, and identity. And the most authentic learning comes not from institutions, but from lived traditions within our own homes.

Q. What challenges did you face while establishing yourself, and how has your journey evolved over the years?

After motherhood, I began taking this work seriously. That was when I started documenting traditional food practices and curating intimate dining experiences to present an honest narrative of Ladakhi cuisine free from commercial pressures.

Although my husband is in hospitality, I realised early on that the hotel industry was not the right fit for me. It requires a certain temperament and constant engagement at scale. I chose instead to work in a more intentional, limited format. My dining experiences are small, curated, and mostly word-of-mouth, with around 60 tables a year. This allows me to engage meaningfully with people who are genuinely interested.

At the same time, my journey into food processing began organically. During our time in Nubra, we started working with farm produce especially apricots making preserves, pickles, and juices for personal use and for the hotel. I realised I enjoyed this process and began researching preservation techniques, particularly from regions with climates similar to Ladakh. You cannot apply mainstream methods from the plains here; the ecology is entirely different.

This led to experimentation and eventually to developing products like apricot preserves low in sugar, retaining the fruit's natural texture essentially preserving the flavour of Ladakhi summer in a jar. Initially, this was for my own family, especially my children, but it gradually evolved into something larger.

In 2021, I formally established Ladags Earth Agro Foods Private Limited. Production began in earnest in 2022, but we have consciously kept the scale small around two to three metric tonnes annually. Most of our products are consumed within Ladakh, with some distribution across India through a Delhi-based logistics partner. Growth has been organic, without advertising, and we prefer to maintain quality and balance over rapid expansion.

I also began doing pop-ups, though reluctantly at first. Over time, I realised that Ladakhi food is underrepresented in the larger narrative of Indian cuisine. Our food is as Indian as dal, roti, or chawal, yet it is often reduced to stereotypes like momo and thukpa.

That is why every pop-up I do is narrative-driven. It is not just about serving food, but about telling the story behind it its ingredients, seasonality, preservation techniques, and cultural context. In places like Kerala and Mumbai, these experiences have been very well received, often selling out. The idea is to use food as a medium to help people understand Ladakh its land, biodiversity, and traditions.

After these initial pop-ups, I took a break due to a high-risk pregnancy and early motherhood. This recent phase marks my return after nearly three years.

Looking back, my journey has evolved slowly and organically. It has been shaped not just by professional choices, but also by personal milestones. At its core, it remains about preserving heritage, staying connected to the land, and sharing that story in a meaningful way.

Q. Tell us about Artisanal Alchemy

Artisanal Alchemy began with a simple yet deeply personal idea to preserve, in a jar, the essence of a Ladakhi summer. It was about capturing that familiar tangy-sweet flavour of apricots and making it available on our table throughout the year, while also honouring the heritage of the fruit itself. Many of the apricots we use come from nearly 200-year-old trees in our garden in Nubra, and there was also a practical need to utilise this abundant produce, which would otherwise go to waste.

The concept first took shape around 2018, when I began experimenting with apricot preserves at home. What started as a basic attempt at making jam gradually evolved into something more nuanced. I began adapting recipes, techniques, and processes both traditional and contemporary from different parts of the world, and reworking them to suit Ladakh's unique ecology, produce, and sensibilities. The focus has always been on creating simple, honest, farm-driven food using ingredients sourced directly from our own land.

In 2021, the venture was formally incorporated under Ladags Earth Agro Foods (OPC) Pvt. Ltd., marking our entry into the retail space with Artisanal Alchemy preserves and curated products. Everything we produce is small-batch, handcrafted, and rooted in an artisanal approach. From picking and sorting to cutting, cooking, bottling, and packaging each step is done manually, often on the same day, to preserve the freshness and flavour of the fruit.

Since we work with fresh, seasonal produce, our offerings are inherently limited and change throughout the year. At present, we have a small batch of apricot conserve available, which has successfully cleared quality testing at Equinox Labs, Mumbai, and has a shelf life of up to 36 months.

Our next cycle of production begins with the fresh apricot harvest in mid-July. Looking ahead, we plan to introduce a few more niche, seasonal products, always staying true to our core philosophy preserving the authenticity, flavour, and integrity of Ladakh's produce.

Q. What changes have you observed in food habits in Ladakh over the years?

When I was growing up in a joint family in Leh, food was deeply traditional and rooted in sustenance. Meals were hearty and consistent—breakfasts often included khambir, kholak, and even meat like (frozen or minced meat). Nutrition was taken very seriously, and as children, we were encouraged to eat organ meats like liver and kidney, especially in a household with growing children and women who were pregnant or lactating.

Fortnightly News

In Conversation with Kunzes Angmo: Documenting Ladakhi Food Traditions

...Continuity of page 6

One constant in our home was namthuk. My father has had it every day since childhood, and that habit continues even now, regardless of where we are. That tradition has carried forward to the next generation my children, too, have grown up eating it daily. It reflects how food was not just about taste, but about nourishment, continuity, and habit.

After marriage, I became part of another traditional household where practices like growing food, maintaining livestock, and seasonal eating are still followed. In such homes, food remains closely tied to the land.

However, over the years, I have seen significant changes across Ladakh. Even within families, food habits have become more mixed. At my parents' home, for instance, there is a blend of Ladakhi and other regional influences, and in many households today, traditional food is no longer part of everyday life.

This shift is natural. Earlier, most families relied on subsistence agriculture and lived in joint setups growing their own barley, vegetables, herbs, and maintaining livestock. Today, with changing professions, nuclear families, and busier lifestyles, food habits have evolved accordingly.

It is not about judging these changes as good or bad food culture is always evolving. For example, rice was once rarely consumed in Ladakh but has now become a staple in many households.

At the same time, I don't believe in being prescriptive about food or suggesting that people must return to tradition in a rigid way. What I do find encouraging, however, is that there is a renewed interest in Ladakhi cuisine today especially among the younger generation and even within the commercial space.

Many older hotels, which traditionally catered to international tourists, have long served Ladakhi food. Now, even newer restaurants and establishments are beginning to include it on their menus. That in itself is a positive shift.

That said, I do feel there is still room to do greater justice to the cuisine. One of the key challenges is the blurring of distinctions between Ladakhi and Tibetan food, which are often presented as interchangeable, even though they have evolved differently.

For instance, the use of red chilli is not historically part of Ladakhi cuisine, whereas it became more prominent in Tibetan food due to earlier exposure through trade routes connected to eastern regions like Sichuan. Similarly, things like red chilli chutneys are now often assumed to be traditional, when in reality they are not part of Ladakhi home cooking.

Despite these nuances, it is heartening to see people in both Leh and Kargil increasingly reclaiming and engaging with Ladakhi food. What is equally important is the growing understanding that food is cultural, not religious. It predates religion it is shaped by land, climate, and community. Hunger is universal, and what we eat is ultimately a reflection of what our environment sustains.

This also means that if we do not consciously preserve traditional food practices, future generations may grow up assuming that what they eat today is what has always been "traditional." Food is an important part of intangible cultural heritage it carries memory, identity, and a sense of belonging.

For me, observing these changes has been an important part of my journey understanding how food evolves, while also recognising the need to document and preserve what might otherwise be lost.

Q. How can Ladakhi cuisine contribute to boosting tourism?

Ladakhi cuisine can play a powerful role in tourism by offering visitors an authentic experience of the region's culture, climate, and way of life. Today's travellers are looking for more than just sightseeing they want to connect with a place, and food is one of the most meaningful ways to do that.

If presented with authenticity and context, Ladakhi food can become a key part of that experience. However, it is often reduced to a few dishes like momo and thukpa, which does not reflect its true diversity. There is a need to showcase traditional ingredients, techniques, and stories more accurately.

Experiences like curated meals, homestays, and farm-based tourism can help visitors engage more deeply with local food culture while also supporting communities. If done thoughtfully, Ladakhi cuisine can become a strong cultural anchor for tourism—one that is both enriching for travellers and sustainable for the region.

Q. What message would you like to give to young people aspiring to work in food or hospitality?

I would say first, take the time to understand yourself. Know what you enjoy, what you are good at, and what truly makes you happy. You don't have to follow a fixed path or do what everyone else is doing.

There is no one definition of success. You can work in a structured profession, or you can build something independently as an entrepreneur. What is important is to choose something you can stay committed to in the long run.

Also, don't feel pressured to do everything at once. It's equally important to know what you don't want. When you understand yourself clearly, your decisions become easier, and your path becomes more meaningful.

टेंडर सूचना

- सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि द्वितीय बटालियन दि लद्दाख स्काउट्स रेजिमेंट में युनिट दुकानों का 3 वर्षों का टेंडर 11 महीने की लीज पर दिनांक 15 अप्रैल 2026 को प्रातः 10:00 बजे से 12:00 बजे तक लेखा कार्यालय, द्वितीय बटालियन दि लद्दाख स्काउट्स रेजिमेंट में खोला जाएगा।
- एडम और मेंटेनेंस चार्ज दुकानों का माप व उपयोग के आधार पर निर्धारित होगा जो कि इच्छुक व्यक्ति हमारे कार्यालय से ले सकते हैं या मोबाइल नंबर 93893-93749 से प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।
- दुकान का आवंटन होने के बाद, आवंटित को दुकान में प्रतिमाह कम से कम 25 दिन उपस्थित रहना होगा।
- युनिट दुकानों के प्रकार निम्नलिखित हैं :-
 - टेलर की दुकान।
 - आर्मी जनरल स्टोर।
- उपरोक्त दुकानों में आवश्यकता अनुसार फेरबदल किया जा सकता है। निम्नलिखित को प्राथमिकता दी जाएगी
 - वीर-नारी।
 - ड्यूटी के दौरान वीरगति प्राप्त सैनिकों के आश्रित।
 - युद्ध में विकलांग हुए भूतपूर्व सैनिक।
 - भूतपूर्व सैनिक।
- टेंडर फॉर्म दिनांक 01 अप्रैल-2026 से दिनांक 10 अप्रैल 2026 तक दोपहर 12:00 बजे तक लेखा कार्यालय द्वितीय बटालियन दि लद्दाख स्काउट्स रेजिमेंट से प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।
- अधिक जानकारी के लिए सूबेदार मेजर या मुख्य लिपिक, द्वितीय बटालियन दि लद्दाख स्काउट्स रेजिमेंट में किसी भी कार्य दिवस को प्रातः 10:00 बजे से 12:00 बजे तक मिल सकते हैं।
- आवंटित दुकानदार को युनिट स्थानांतरण के समय युनिट के साथ स्थानांतरण करना जरूरी होगा।

आदेशानुसार
कमान अधिकारी
द्वितीय बटालियन दि लद्दाख स्काउट्स रेजिमेंट

DC Kargil conducts quarterly inspection of EVM/VVPAT warehouse at Kurbathang



Photo Caption: During the quarterly physical verification of the EVM/VVPAT warehouse at Kurbathang, Kargil.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: District Election Officer (DEO) and Deputy Commissioner Kargil, Rakesh Kumar, on March 25 conducted the scheduled quarterly physical verification of the EVM/VVPAT warehouse at Kurbathang, in accordance with the guidelines of the Election Commission of India.

The warehouse was opened at around 2:00 PM in the presence of designated officers, representatives of political parties, and other concerned officials. The inspection was carried out under strict protocol to ensure transparency and adherence to prescribed norms.

Officials present during the inspection included the Executive Engineer, PDD; Assistant Accounts Officer (AAO) Treasury; Deputy Superintendent of Police (Dy SP); personnel from Fire and Emergency Services; representatives from the Election Cell; and representatives of recognized political parties.

During the inspection, the warehouse seal was opened under proper video recording, and the status of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and VVPAT units was physically verified. Upon completion, the warehouse was securely sealed again, and the keys were handed over to the Treasury Officer for safe custody, as per established guidelines.

The DEO emphasized that such periodic inspections are mandatory to ensure the safety, security, and integrity of election equipment. All procedures were duly recorded in the logbook, and security arrangements were maintained throughout the process.

The inspection was conducted smoothly, maintaining full transparency and strict compliance with the Election Commission's instructions.

The quarterly inspection is a routine and mandatory exercise conducted in the presence of political party representatives during both the opening and sealing of the warehouse to ensure accountability and adherence to electoral norms.

21 domestic LPG cylinders seized during surprise market inspection in Kargil



Photo Caption: During the inspection drive of tea stalls, hotels, and restaurants in Kargil.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: In an effort to curb the illegal use of domestic Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders for commercial purposes, the district administration of Kargil on March 23 conducted a surprise market inspection drive on the directions of the Additional District Magistrate.

The inspection was carried out by a joint enforcement team led by Naib Tehsildar Fida Mohd Hassanain Mir. The team included Mehboob Khan, Thana

Incharge Kargil; Mohammad Abass, Tehsil Supply Officer; and Mustafa Ali, Storekeeper, Kargil.

During the drive, several tea stalls, hotels, and restaurants were found violating government norms by using domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes. Such usage is strictly prohibited, as domestic LPG is subsidised exclusively for household consumption.

As a result, 21 domestic LPG cylinders were seized from various commercial establishments across the market area.

Speaking on the occasion, Mir said the inspection was conducted smoothly and successfully. He emphasised that similar enforcement drives would continue to ensure strict compliance with LPG regulations and to prevent misuse of subsidised domestic gas.

The district administration reiterated its commitment to uniform enforcement of rules and warned commercial establishments against violating LPG usage norms, stating that strict action would be taken against defaulters as per the law.

The inspection was carried out by a joint enforcement team led by Naib Tehsildar Fida Mohd Hassanain Mir. The team included Mehboob Khan, Thana Incharge Kargil; Mohammad Abass, Tehsil Supply Officer; and Mustafa Ali, Storekeeper, Kargil.

Zanskar Winter Sports & Tourism Festival 2026 concludes with enthusiasm and grandeur



Photo Caption: During the 5th edition of the Zanskar Winter Sports and Tourism Festival.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

ZANSKAR: The 5th edition of the Zanskar Winter Sports and Tourism Festival 2026 concluded with great enthusiasm at the Sports Stadium, Zanskar.

Councillor of Karsha Constituency, Stanzin Jigmath, attended the closing ceremony as the Chief Guest. Tehsildar Zanskar, Mohd Hassan, was the Guest of Honour, while Station House Officer, Inspector Nurboo Lonpo, attended as the Special Guest.

On the second day of the festival, a variety of winter sports and cultural activities were organised. Participants from the Snow Ski School Zanskar showcased events such as cross-country skiing, snow rally races, Sonolam, and snowshoe races.

A special Snow Yoga presentation by students of Government Higher Secondary School, Padum, added a unique highlight to the programme, with dignitaries also joining the activity.

The guests also inspected snow sculptures created

by local artists, appreciating their creativity and craftsmanship.

In the later part of the programme, the guests witnessed the final matches of volleyball and traditional archery, followed by a cultural performance presented by local artists and schoolchildren.

Trophies and awards were distributed to winners, runners-up, and participants across various events. The administration appreciated the efforts of all departments for their tireless support in making the festival a grand success.

The Zonal Physical Education Officer, Zanskar, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to participants and all stakeholders for their whole-hearted support.

The festival concluded on a vibrant note, celebrating sportsmanship, cultural heritage, and community participation in Zanskar.

NOTICE

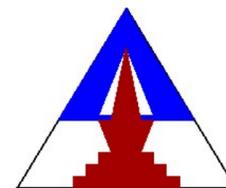
I, Tsewang Rinchen S/o Sonam Angchok R/o Leh UT Ladakh do hereby notify that my father's name has been wrongly recorded as Sonam Angchug instead of correct and actual name Sonam Angchok in my ST Certificate duly issued by Tehsil Office, Leh UT Ladakh with Registration No. 571-75/ ST-Leh/98 and Dated on 22-05-1998. Now, I'm applying for changes in my ST Certificate and objection, if any may be conveyed to Tehsil Office, Leh UT Ladakh within 07 days from the date of publication.

NOTICE

I, Tundup Gyalson S/o Tashi Rigzin R/o Temisgam, Leh UT Ladakh do hereby notify that my name has been wrongly recorded as Tundup Galtson instead of correct and actual name Tundup Gyalson in my ST Certificate with Registration No. 325-30/ ST-Leh 97 and Dated on 08-07-1997. Now, I'm applying for changes in my ST Certificate and objection, if any may be conveyed to Tehsil Office, Khaltse UT Ladakh within 07 days from the date of publication.



RECRUITMENT OF CASUAL PAID LABOUR



(HQ 50 BRTF Letter No. : 2003/Lab Sanctioned/128/E2, dated 17 Feb 2026)

The General Public is hereby informed that 51 RCC of 50 BRTF under PROJECT HIMANK will start their hiring for casual paid labour wef 23/03/2026 at SHAKTI, Induction & Medical Camp at 51 RCC. Salary will vary as per skill set.

Candidate must have a valid E-Sharm, Aadhar Card, Bank A/C, Bank Mandate Form and will have to bring their own Medical Fitness Certificate as working height will be at an altitude ranging 13500-18314 ft. Only MALE candidates of age restricted to 18-45 Yrs. as on 23/03/2026.

Selection will be based on scrutiny of Medically & Mentally fit candidates, hiring duration will be 179 days. Applicants can early send their application to HQ 51 RCC E2-Sec (Pin-930051) by post.

For more information Contact HQ 51 RCC :

1. Shri Aviral Jain, EE (Civ) (Officer Commanding), +91- 8126900510
2. Shri Akhilesh Anand, AEE (Civ) (Second-In-Command), +91 - 7210642633

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