

# REACH LADAKH BULLETIN



**In Conversation with**

Phuntsog Angchuk, Founder, Ladakh Rocks and Minerals, Preservation Study and Museum



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## Rising road accidents in Leh raise serious safety concerns

30 cases in just over three months of 2026 signal growing crisis



### Accident trends and key figures

PERIOD	ACCIDENTS	DEATH	INJURED
2014-2018	431	167	399
2022-2025	679	182	864
2026-Till Date	30	6	36

864, more than doubling previous figures.

The rise in non-fatal accidents indicates that while more people may be surviving crashes, a far greater number are being affected physically and emotionally, placing additional pressure on families and healthcare systems.

The trend shows no signs of slowing down. In just the first three and a half months of 2026, 30 accident cases have already been reported, resulting in 6 deaths and 36 injuries, including 4 cases of grievous injuries.

Calling the situation "worrying," Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Regzin Sandup said that the figures are particularly alarming given the sparse population of the region. "Thirty accidents in just three and a half months is a matter of concern. If this trend continues, the numbers could rise significantly by the end of the year," he said.

Highlighting the causes behind these accidents, ASP Sandup pointed to both natural and human factors. "During winters, icy road conditions contribute to a large number of accidents. However, human negligence, especially alcohol consumption, remains one of the leading causes," he explained.

Sharing insights from recent investigations, he revealed that laboratory tests have shown a high incidence of alcohol involvement. "Out of 10 samples sent for testing, 9 indicated alcohol consumption, which is extremely concerning," he said.

Another troubling factor is the increasing incidence of un-

derage driving. According to officials, minors driving vehicles without valid licenses are putting not only their own lives at risk but also endangering others on the road.

Equally concerning is the response of bystanders at accident sites. In many cases, victims are not provided immediate assistance due to hesitation among the public. Fear of police questioning, legal formalities, or court appearances often discourages people from stepping forward to help.

Addressing this issue, ASP Sandup urged citizens to overcome such misconceptions. "There is a general fear that helping an accident victim will involve police or court procedures. This is not true. Saving a life should be the priority. Timely help can make the difference between life and death," he stressed.

He also raised concern over the growing trend of people recording accident scenes instead of offering help. "It is unfortunate that some individuals choose to take photos and videos of victims and circulate them on social media. This is insensitive and unacceptable. People must act responsibly and show compassion," he added.

To tackle the rising number of accidents, the police have stepped up enforcement measures. Night checking drives are being intensified, with the use of breath analysers to detect drunk driving. Authorities are also focusing on stricter monitoring of traffic violations and awareness campaigns to promote safe driving practices.

Despite these efforts, officials stress that enforcement alone cannot solve the problem. The responsibility also lies with the public. Reckless driving, violation of traffic rules, and lack of awareness continue to contribute to accidents.

The data serves as a stark reminder that road safety is a shared responsibility. As Ladakh continues to witness growth in mobility and tourism, the need for responsible driving, stricter adherence to rules, and a culture of helping accident victims has never been more urgent.

Unless immediate and collective efforts are made, the rising trend of accidents could continue to claim more lives and leave many more injured on the region's challenging roads.

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## L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena reviews progress at Zoji-La tunnel project

Expresses satisfaction, calls for expediting work to ensure year-round connectivity to Ladakh



Photo Caption: Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena reviewing the progress of the ongoing construction work of the Zoji-La Tunnel.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, on April 13 visited the eastern portal of the Zoji-La Tunnel during his tour to Drass to review the progress of the ongoing construction work on the strategically significant project.

During the visit, the Lieutenant Governor was briefed in detail about the project's status. Officials informed that the tunnel, being executed by Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Ltd at a sanctioned cost of ₹6,808.69 crore, is expected to be completed by February 2028. The breakthrough of the tunnel is anticipated by mid-2026.

The project incorporates modern engineering features, including lay-bys at intervals of 750 metres and three ventilation shafts to ensure safety and operational efficiency. The Lieutenant Governor was also informed about the use of the New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM) for excavation from both the eastern and western portals. However, officials pointed out that poor rock quality in certain stretches has posed challenges, affecting the pace of work.

Expressing satisfaction over the progress achieved so far, the Lieutenant Governor directed officials to expedite the work to ensure timely

completion and early operationalisation of the tunnel. He stressed that the project is crucial for ensuring year-round connectivity to Ladakh. He also emphasised the need to maintain the highest safety standards during both the construction phase and after completion, keeping in view the safety of commuters.

Describing the Zoji-La Tunnel as one of the dream projects of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, L-G Saxena commended the dedication and resilience of the workforce engaged in the project, particularly in the challenging terrain and harsh weather conditions.

He noted that once completed, the tunnel will ensure seamless connectivity between Ladakh and the rest of the country, while also giving a major boost to tourism in the region. Highlighting its strategic importance, he said the project would contribute to economic growth and strengthen socio-cultural integration between the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The Lieutenant Governor added that the completion of the Zoji-La Tunnel would mark a transformative milestone for the region, opening new avenues for development and positioning Ladakh as a key tourism destination.

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## Fortnightly News

### Long-pending Aadhaar issue resolved in Ladakh

UIDAI updates State field, ending years of inconvenience



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** In a significant development addressing a long-pending public demand, residents of Ladakh can now see their rightful identity reflected in Aadhaar records, with "Ladakh" replacing "Jammu & Kashmir" in the State field, following the intervention of Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

Despite the formation of the Union Territory of Ladakh in 2019, after being carved out of Jammu & Kashmir, Aadhaar records of residents had continued to reflect the erstwhile State name, causing widespread inconvenience. Taking serious note of the prolonged pendency, the Lieutenant Governor directed the UT Administration to resolve the issue at the earliest.

Subsequently, the Administration took up the matter with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) at higher levels. The long-awaited correction

has now been successfully implemented, ensuring that Ladakh's distinct regional identity is accurately represented in Aadhaar records.

The continued reflection of "Jammu & Kashmir" in Aadhaar records had been causing considerable inconvenience, as residents faced difficulties in using Aadhaar as a valid identity and address proof while availing various services. The mismatch in the State field did not correspond to Ladakh's post-reorganisation status, leading to procedural hurdles and discrepancies in official records.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the development would significantly benefit residents by removing such hurdles and enabling seamless access to services. He emphasised that accurately reflecting Ladakh's identity in official records is not only an administrative necessity but also a matter of dignity and convenience for the people.

To resolve the issue, the UT Administration, in coordination with UIDAI, devised an innovative mechanism to update the State field centrally. Instead of requiring individuals to visit Aadhaar centres, records were updated based on Ladakh-specific PIN codes. These were verified in coordination with the Department of Posts and shared with UIDAI.

This initiative has brought major relief to residents, who no longer need to visit Aadhaar centres individually for corrections. They can now download their updated e-Aadhaar from the official UIDAI portal, while those wishing to obtain a PVC Aadhaar card may order it online for a nominal fee.

### CPO Leh chairs meeting on District Capex Budget 2026-27



Photo Caption: Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Leh, Konchok Gyalson discussing the formulation of the District Capex Budget for 2026-27 at the VC Room of the DC Office.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Leh, Konchok Gyalson, chaired a meeting to discuss the formulation of the District Capex Budget for 2026-27 at the VC Room of the DC Office, Leh.

The meeting focused on reviewing the status of ongoing schemes, particularly those pending closure. Key directives included the preparation of a comprehensive list of completed schemes and the clear identification of allotted and targeted projects.

Departments were also instructed to develop a structured action plan to ensure the timely implementation and closure of projects.

It was emphasized that priority should be given to works due for completion within the current financial year while formulating the action plan.

The meeting was attended by Superintending Engineers of PWD and PHE/I&FC, Leh; the Assistant Commissioner Development, Leh; Executive Engineers from PW(R&B), Construction Divisions, SSD Khaltai, PHE/I&FC, LDA, and EDD; as well as Assistant Directors (Planning) from the PWD, Rural Development, and Education departments.

Officials from SSD Nyoma and SSD Nubra also participated in the meeting virtually.

### Ladakh gets first UT-run Old Age Home; MoU signed with MIMC

L-G emphasises inclusive development and strengthened elderly care services



Photo Caption: Old Age Home (Zimskhang) for senior citizens at Saboonthang.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, on April 10 inaugurated the Old Age Home (Zimskhang) for senior citizens at Saboonthang, marking a significant step towards strengthening social welfare and inclusive development in the region.

Constructed at a cost of ₹19.74 crore and spread over an area of 1,925 square metres, the facility is a state-of-the-art structure designed to accommodate 50 to 55 elderly residents, including both men and women. It comprises 12 rooms and four dormitories, along with a reception and waiting area, TV room, dining-cum-kitchen space, medical and office rooms, and essential utility services such as water supply, electricity, and sewerage systems.

Additional features include a geodesic dome with seating arrangements for prayer, a fire-fighting system with alarms and a public address system, passenger lifts, and accessibility provisions for differently-abled individuals.

The Old Age Home also incorporates several green and energy-efficient features, such as the use of eco-friendly construction materials, adherence to green building norms, an Energy Conservation Building Code (EC-BC)-compliant electrical substation, maximum utilisation of natural light, and thermal insulation through natural earth walls. The geodesic dome design helps trap solar heat, enhancing energy efficiency and comfort.

Addressing the gathering, the Lieutenant Governor described the inauguration as a moment of great significance, stating that the facility is not merely a building but a symbol of society's values, compassion, and collective responsibility towards its elderly population.

Highlighting Ladakh's cultural ethos, he said the region has always upheld deep respect for senior citizens,

who serve as custodians of tradition and guiding forces in society. He acknowledged the contributions of organisations such as the Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, HelpAge India, and Tibetan Settlement Choglamsar for their continued efforts in the welfare of the elderly.

The Lieutenant Governor noted that this is the first instance of the UT Administration directly establishing such a facility for senior citizens, ensuring a safe, dignified, and well-managed environment. The facility will be operated under a collaborative model with the Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, following the signing of an MoU between the UT Administration and MIMC.

Emphasising the invaluable role of senior citizens, L-G Saxena said they are repositories of wisdom, experience, and cultural values whose guidance strengthens families and society.

He also underlined the moral responsibility of society to care for its elderly, particularly in their later years when they require both physical care and emotional support. Noting that loneliness can become a concern with advancing age, he urged families to spend time with their elders, listen to them, and make them feel valued and included.

He stressed that the objective should go beyond providing shelter and instead ensure that every senior citizen lives with dignity, security, and a sense of belonging.

Reaffirming the Administration's commitment, the Lieutenant Governor stated that efforts will continue to promote inclusive development, strengthen social security mechanisms, and ensure that governance reaches every section of society, especially senior citizens.

### L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena reviews progress of New Terminal Building at KBR Airport Leh

New terminal to boost tourist footfall; officials asked to meet July 2026 deadline



Photo Caption: Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena reviewing the progress of the New Terminal Building of Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Airport.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, on April 9 visited Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Airport to review the progress of the upcoming New Terminal Building being constructed at an estimated cost of ₹640 crore.

During the visit, the Lieutenant Governor inspected key facilities at the new terminal, including baggage carousels, waiting lounges, public amenities, and parking infrastructure.

Officials informed him that the state-of-the-art terminal, spread over approximately 19,000 square metres, is being developed as a three-level structure and will be completed in two phases. Phase I includes 20 check-in counters, an inline baggage handling system (BHS), provision

for a 700 kWp rooftop solar power system, two arrival carousels, 15 lifts, and 12 escalators. Phase II will involve demolition of the existing old terminal building to construct an apron with four additional aircraft bays and three aerobridges.

The addition of four new bays is expected to significantly enhance operational capacity, enabling the airport to handle up to 54 flights per day, compared to the current 18. The new terminal is designed to cater to 3.5 million passengers annually, with a peak-hour handling capacity of 2,000 passengers (1,000 arrivals and 1,000 departures).

Highlighting innovative features, officials noted that gradient floor heating using geothermal technology will be implemented on a large scale for the first time in the country. The

project also incorporates sustainable elements such as rooftop solar systems to reduce carbon emissions. It was further informed that the project timeline has been revised, with completion now expected by August 2026.

During the inspection, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised that the new terminal would serve as a major catalyst in boosting tourist footfall in Ladakh, particularly with the anticipated increase in flight operations. Describing it as a dream project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he directed officials to expedite work by deploying additional manpower and ensuring round-the-clock execution, setting a target for completion by July 2026.

L-G Saxena lauded the adoption of eco-friendly and cutting-edge technologies, especially the use of geothermal energy and solar power. He also appreciated the incorporation of locally inspired architectural elements such as prayer wheels, stupas, and culturally themed arrival and departure gates, which would offer visitors an authentic glimpse of Ladakh's rich heritage.

The Lieutenant Governor assured full support from the UT Administration for early operationalisation of the new terminal and expansion of flight services. He noted that the enhanced infrastructure would play a key role in positioning Ladakh as a leading tourist destination while generating significant economic opportunities for local communities associated with the tourism sector.

### L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena launches Project Him Sarovar to strengthen water security in Ladakh

Calls for collective efforts to create new "green and blue assets" for ecological balance



Photo Caption: Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena launching the Project Him Sarovar.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** In a proactive step towards ensuring long-term water security in the cold desert region, the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, on April 10 launched Project Him Sarovar. The project aims to promote scientific snow harvesting and the creation of water bodies to address the pressing challenge of water scarcity in Ladakh.

The initiative focuses on harvesting snow and conserving snowmelt to strengthen water security across the region, where water availability remains a critical concern due to its unique climatic and geographical conditions.

L-G Saxena formally launched the project with the commencement of excavation work for the creation of 50 water bodies simultaneously in Leh and Kargil. These structures, measuring 40x30 metres and 2 metres in depth, are designed to store snowmelt and glacial melt that would otherwise go to waste each year, thereby providing a reliable source of water for irrigation.

Describing the initiative as historic, the Lieutenant Governor stated that Project Him Sarovar marks a decisive and scientific intervention to tackle the growing issue of water availability in Ladakh, where water is not merely a resource but a life-

line for the people.

Notably, soon after assuming office on March 13, L-G Saxena had directed the Chief Secretary to identify suitable locations and prepare an action plan for the construction of 50 small water bodies across the Union Territory.

Highlighting the importance of the project, he said it is directly linked to Ladakh's water security and will play a crucial role in addressing irrigation challenges faced by farmers who depend on limited water sources. He emphasised that these water bodies will help conserve both rainwater and annual snowmelt, creating a dependable source of water for agricultural purposes.

He further stated that Project Him Sarovar will not only fulfil irrigation needs but also generate sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities. The project is being designed using scientific methods, taking into account Ladakh's fragile ecosystem and climatic conditions.

The Lieutenant Governor noted that the initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of restoring 2.6 crore hectares of degraded land by 2030, contributing to broader environmental conservation goals.

He also highlighted the strong support extended to the project by various stakeholders, including the Indian Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Border Roads Organisation (BRO), and the local population, and lauded the people of Ladakh for their encouraging response.

L-G Saxena added that the project has been conceptualised in line with Ladakh's unique geographical and climatic conditions, and that water bodies will be developed in consultation with local communities to meet specific regional needs. In addition to water conservation, the initiative will also support plantation efforts along roadsides and enhance green cover.

Addressing the broader environmental context, he pointed to the visible impacts of climate change in Ladakh, including declining snowfall, melting glaciers, rising temperatures, and falling water tables. He stressed the urgent need for sustainable water management practices to mitigate these challenges.

Underscoring the importance of preserving traditional irrigation systems alongside modern solutions, the Lieutenant Governor called for collective efforts to enhance Ladakh's natural landscape by creating new "green and blue assets" to ensure long-term ecological balance.

## Fortnightly News

### Administrative Secretary inaugurates first commercial Rooftop solar installation in Leh



Photo Caption: During the inauguration of the first commercial rooftop solar installation at Hotel Barath, Leh.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Administrative Secretary, Power Development and New & Renewable Energy, Rudra Goud P.T., inaugurated the first commercial rooftop solar installation at Hotel Barath, Leh on April 7, marking a significant milestone in Ladakh's journey towards clean energy adoption and sustainable development.

Commending the management of Hotel Barath for this pioneering initiative, the Administrative Secretary described the installation as an important step not only at the individual and institutional levels but also for the Union Territory and the nation as a whole. He stated that such initiatives contribute meaningfully to the vision of a carbon-neutral Ladakh while promoting the use of clean, renewable, and sustainable energy sources.

He highlighted that rooftop solar systems are both environmentally beneficial and economically viable, enabling consumers to reduce long-term electricity costs while contributing to the broader goal of a green energy transition.

The Administrative Secretary further noted that the tourism industry, a vital pillar of Ladakh's economy, stands to benefit significantly from such initiatives. Solar-powered hospitality infrastructure, he said, would help hotels manage energy consumption more efficiently while strengthening Ladakh's image as a sustainable tourism destination, thereby attracting environmentally conscious travellers.

Encouraging wider adoption, he urged

hotels, entrepreneurs, and commercial establishments across Ladakh to take advantage of opportunities under rooftop solar initiatives. He also pointed out the availability of loan facilities, particularly through MSME-linked support mechanisms, making such investments increasingly accessible for local business owners. He added that rooftop solar installations become highly cost-effective over time and, in many cases, can significantly reduce or even eliminate electricity bills after a few years of operation. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Engineer, PDD Ladakh, Tsewang Paljor, congratulated Hotel Barath for becoming the first commercial establishment in Ladakh to implement such an installation. He elaborated on the practical and financial benefits of rooftop solar systems and informed that proposals for a broader solar policy have already been submitted to the competent authority. He added that commercial rooftop solar remains a promising option even in the absence of direct subsidies in certain cases, owing to its long-term savings and efficiency.

He further noted that, depending on the category and system type, substantial financial viability exists for consumers adopting rooftop solar. In addition to lowering power bills, such systems improve voltage stability and reduce pressure on the conventional grid. He also shared that several more hotels are in the pipeline for similar installations and encouraged other hospitality establishments to adopt this clean energy solution.

Addressing the gathering, President of the All Ladakh Hotel & Guest House Association Leh, Rigzin Wangmo Lachic, said the inauguration was the result of sustained efforts over the past five years. She described the development as a proud moment for Ladakh and a model initiative for the tourism and hospitality sector. Emphasising the importance of tourism in the region, she noted that rooftop solar initiatives can help address energy tariff concerns while promoting environmentally responsible growth.

The event was attended by Superintendent Engineer Tundup Spalrang, representatives of various trade and business bodies including the Hotel Association, ALTOA, ALGHA, Merchant Association, and officials from Tata, Silk Route Energy, and other stakeholders.

### Foundation laid for rGyal Khatoon, Sher Bagh parks in Kargil

18-month projects to bring modern amenities and planned public spaces



Photo Caption: L-G Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena laying the foundation stone for the development and beautification of rGyal Khatoon Park and Sher Bagh Park in Kargil.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, on April 12 laid the foundation stone for the development and beautification of rGyal Khatoon Park and Sher Bagh Park in Kargil. Both projects are being undertaken under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme.

The rGyal Khatoon Park is being developed at a cost of ₹2.98 crore and is expected to be completed within 18 months. The park will span an area of 25,250 square metres (2,525 hectares). Located nearby in Baroo, Sher Bagh Park is also being developed at a cost of ₹2.98 crore, with a similar completion timeline of 18 months, covering an area of 34,190 square metres (3,419 hectares). Both parks will feature modern amenities, including footpaths, water facilities, lighting, children's play equipment, CCTV surveillance, waterfalls, and other essential infrastructure.

The rGyal Khatoon Park is named in memory of the mother of a renowned king of the Suru Karchay region, Khree Mohammad Sultan Cho. rGyal Khatoon, later known as Thila Khatoon, was the daughter of Sheikh Murad and sister of the famous Ali Sher Khan Anchan of the Yabgo dynasty of Khapulu, now in Pakistan-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor extended warm greetings to the people of Kargil and congratulated them on the launch of this significant urban development initiative. He noted that the parks would not only benefit local residents but also enhance the experience of tourists visiting the region.

He stated that the parks would be equipped with modern civic amenities and well-planned infrastructure, including walking and jogging tracks, landscaped green spaces, seating areas, children's play zones, and improved lighting, ensuring a vibrant and comfortable environment for people of all age groups.

Highlighting the natural beauty of Kargil, the Lieutenant Governor remarked that while the region's snow-clad mountains add unmatched charm, collective efforts are equally important to maintain cleanliness and preserve the aesthetic appeal of public spaces. He urged citizens to take responsibility for keeping their surroundings clean and well-maintained.

He further emphasized that the development of such recreational spaces would significantly boost tourism and improve Kargil's overall urban environment.

The Lieutenant Governor also announced plans to visit Kargil Bazaar to review the town's development needs. He stressed the importance of holistic urban planning and said discussions would be held with Chief Executive Councillor of LAHDC Kargil, Dr Mohd Jaffer Akhoo, and Member of Parliament for Ladakh, Mohamad Hanifa Jan, to strengthen development strategies for the region.

Earlier, a plantation drive was organized by the Forest Department of the Union Territory of Ladakh at Bemathang. During the event, the Lieutenant Governor planted saplings as part of an initiative to enhance green cover and promote environmental conservation in the region.

### Dr. Yangchan Dolma honoured with IGNOU best Coordinator Award



Photo Caption: Dr. Yangchan Dolma, receiving the Best Coordinator Award by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Regional Centre Srinagar.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Dr. Yangchan Dolma, Coordinator of the IGNOU Learner Support Centre (LSC) 1203 at Eliezer Joldan Memorial College, Leh, was conferred with the Best Coordinator Award by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Regional Centre Srinagar, on April 10.

The prestigious recognition was awarded in appreciation of her exemplary leadership, dedication, and outstanding contributions towards strength-

ening learner support services and promoting quality education during the year 2025.

The award was presented on the occasion of the 39th Convocation of IGNOU, held at the Regional Centre Srinagar on April 7, 2026. Dr. Yangchan Dolma's commitment and tireless efforts have significantly enhanced the functioning of LSC 1203, particularly in ensuring accessibility, inclusivity, and academic excellence in the remote region of

Ladakh.

Her achievement marks a proud moment for the entire IGNOU fraternity in Ladakh and serves as an inspiration for educators and coordinators across the region.

The staff and learners of IGNOU LSC 1203, Leh, have extended their heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Yangchan Dolma on this remarkable achievement and wished her continued success in all her future endeavours.

### L-G V.K. Saxena reviews preparations for Holy relics exposition in Leh, Zanskar

Calls for seamless arrangements, world-class experience for devotees



Photo Caption: L-G, Vinai Kumar Saxena, chairing a meeting with venerable Rinpoches, monks, government officials and concerned stakeholders on Sacred Exposition of the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha in Leh and Zanskar.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, chaired a high-level meeting with venerable Rinpoches, monks from various monasteries, government officials and concerned stakeholders on April 9 to review the arrangements for the upcoming Sacred Exposition of the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha in Leh and Zanskar.

His Eminence Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche, His Eminence Palga Rinpoche, His Eminence Stakna Rinpoche, Ven Sanghasena from Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre (MIMC) and monks and representatives from various monasteries were present in the meeting with the Lieutenant Governor. The meeting also deliberated on preparatory rituals and ceremonial aspects. It was informed that the All Ladakh Gonpa Association will oversee the conduct of chanting recitals by monks from 16 monasteries.

During the meeting, venerable Rinpoches shared valuable suggestions to make the event more inclusive and spiritually enriching. The suggestions included organising a combined chanting of mantras by all 16 monasteries. It was proposed to showcase the life events of Lord Buddha from birth to enlightenment through drone-based visual presentations, and create awareness through distribution of pamphlets and QR-code-enabled information at the Tourist Facilitation Desk at Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Airport and other prominent tourist places.

Suggestions were also made to install informational standees at hotels and guest houses and to organise a special prayer offering at Khardung La. Additionally, it was recommended that the official Thathagata website should include information in Hindi as well, to ensure wider accessibility.

Agreeing with the suggestions of the Rinpoches, the Lieutenant Governor stressed the need for coordinated efforts to ensure a world-class experience for devotees and visitors. Describing the exposition as a historic occasion for Ladakh, Saxena directed that all arrangements be carried out in a seamless and coordinated manner and sought the active cooperation of the venerable Rinpoches and monastic institutions for the

success of the event.

L-G Saxena further directed that prominent landmarks such as Leh Palace, Namgyal Tsemo, forts and the Leh Main Market be illuminated with decorative lighting to create a festive ambience. He also stressed the need to leverage social media platforms to reach a wider audience with information about the event.

Highlighting his vision, the Lieutenant Governor stated that the event presents a unique opportunity to position Ladakh on the global map as a leading spiritual and wellness destination. He also emphasised the need for robust security arrangements, adequate drinking water and public convenience facilities, and installation of CCTV cameras along key routes to ensure the safety and comfort of devotees and delegates.

Notably, the Sacred Relics are expected to arrive in Leh on April 29, where they will be accorded a grand ceremonial reception. The 2569th Buddha Purnima will be celebrated with full religious fervour on May 1, at Jevetsal, followed by the public exposition of the holy relics from May 2 to 9 for veneration at the same venue.

Thereafter, the relics will be taken to Zanskar for public veneration on May 11 and 12. Subsequently, the relics will be displayed at the Dharma Centre in Choglamsar on May 13 and 14, before being flown back to Delhi on May 15. It was also informed that simultaneous exhibitions showcasing Buddhist artefacts/scriptsures will be organised at the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies and Leh Palace.

A series of parallel events will also be held at the Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, including meditation and yoga sessions, as well as medical health camps. In addition, interfaith dialogues and seminars on themes such as "International Conference on Himalayan Buddhism," "Peace in Times of Conflict," and "Past, Present and Future of Buddhism in Ladakh" will be held. Film screenings on the life of Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, a Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Memorial lecturer series, and a talk on "Modern Science and Buddhism" by Geshe Namdak are also part of the programme.

### Social Work students selected for fully funded internship in Germany



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** The Department of Social Work, EJM College has announced the remarkable achievement of its students, Sonam Yangdol and Stanzin Youtso from the 2021-2024 batch.

In recognition of their dedication and outstanding performance, both students have been selected for a fully funded one-year international internship in Germany, marking a significant academic and professional milestone.

As part of the prescribed curriculum, students are required to undergo block placement in reputed organisations. In this regard, both students

successfully completed their placement at the Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG), Leh, where they gained extensive field-based experience in sustainable development and community practice.

The students also visited the Department to express their sincere gratitude to the faculty members and the college administration for their continuous guidance and support throughout their academic journey.

The Department of Social Work congratulated them on this commendable achievement and extended its best wishes for their continued success in future endeavours.

### 568 pilgrims from Ladakh selected for Hajj 2026

Orientation programme held in Kargil to guide pilgrims on rituals and procedures



Photo Caption: During the Hajj Orientation and Training Programme for Hajj 2026 (Hijri 1447) at the Syed Mehdi Memorial Auditorium Hall in Kargil.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** CEC, LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoo, inaugurated the Hajj Orientation and Training Programme for Hajj 2026 (Hijri 1447) at the Syed Mehdi Memorial Auditorium Hall in Kargil on April 12.

The programme, organised by the Hajj Committee Kargil, was held for selected pilgrims from across the district to prepare them for the sacred pilgrimage.

The event commenced with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran (Tilawat-e-Quran), setting a spiritual tone. It was attended by several dignitaries, including Member of Parliament from Ladakh as Guest of Honour, former Executive Councillor Ali Chandan, President JUIAK Sheikh Nazir-ul-Mehdi, along with officials, religious scholars, and pilgrims.

In his welcome address, former Executive Councillor Ali Chandan highlighted the importance of such orientation programmes in ensuring a smooth and well-informed pilgrimage. He urged pilgrims to actively participate in the training sessions to gain a comprehensive understanding of Hajj rituals and procedures.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Akhoo extended his heartfelt congratulations to all selected pilgrims and expressed hope that the programme would equip them with the necessary knowledge and preparedness for the journey. He also appealed to the pilgrims to pray for peace, prosperity, and overall development of Ladakh.

Dr. Akhoo noted that since the formation of the Union Territory of Ladakh, the strengthening of the Hajj Committee has significantly improved facilities and support systems for pilgrims. He expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, and Union Minister Kiren Rijju for their continued support in facilitating Hajj arrangements.

He further informed that a Passport Seva Kendra will soon be established in Kargil district, which will ease administrative processes and benefit residents, particularly prospective pilgrims.

The Chairman of the Hajj Committee also congratulated the pilgrims and thanked the dignitaries for their presence. He expressed appreciation to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Minority Affairs for their continued support, and acknowledged the efforts of trainers and organisers in conducting the programme.

Emphasising the importance of the orientation, he stated that it is not merely a formality and urged pilgrims to make the most of the opportunity by gaining thorough knowledge of Hajj practices and rituals.

During the programme, officials shared details of Hajj 2026, stating that a total of 568 pilgrims from Ladakh have been selected, including 467 from Kargil district (208 male and 259 female) and 101 from Leh district (37 male and 64 female). The programme concluded with prayers for the well-being of all pilgrims and for peace and prosperity in the region.

## Fortnightly News

## Amit Sharma unveils Census 2027 roadmap in Ladakh; announces two workstations to boost grassroots planning



Photo Caption: Chief Principal Census Officer and Director of Census Operations for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma addressing the media during unveiling of the roadmap for Census 2027.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director of Census Operations (DCO) for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma (IAS), on April 3 unveiled the roadmap for Census 2027, describing it as a transformative exercise set to redefine data-driven governance in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Highlighting a key milestone, Sharma said that Census 2027 will be the first Census conducted in Ladakh since it attained Union Territory status in 2019. He termed it a significant opportunity to generate accurate and comprehensive data, enabling targeted development and informed policy interventions in the region. Addressing media persons, he informed that Census 2027 will be India's first fully digital Census, leveraging advanced technology for efficient and transparent data collection. The exercise will be conducted in two phases, with House Listing Operations scheduled from June 1 to 30, preceded by a 15-day self-enumeration period from May 17 to 31.

During the self-enumeration period, citizens will be able to submit their information through a dedicated online portal featuring a 33-question schedule. Sharma stressed the need for widespread awareness to ensure maximum participation across the Union Territory. He further stated that the second phase, Population Enumeration, will be carried out in September 2026 across Ladakh, along with other notified snow-bound areas in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. Details regarding the self-enumeration process for this phase will be notified separately.

In a significant development, Sharma announced that the Ladakh Administration will establish two dedicated Census Workstations in the offices of the Planning, Development and Monitoring Department, in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India. These workstations will provide access to granular, micro-level data,

thereby strengthening planning and policy formulation at the grassroots level.

Emphasising the digital architecture of the Census, he said data will be collected through mobile applications equipped with in-built validation checks. A web-based Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS), developed by C-DAC, will enable real-time supervision and streamlined operations.

Responding to queries, Sharma clarified that Census 2027 is distinct from the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, noting that while SIR pertains to voter lists, the Census is a comprehensive exercise for socio-economic data collection. He added that enumerators will visit households during normal working hours and will carry valid identification, urging citizens to verify credentials.

He also informed that extensive preparatory work has already been undertaken, including large-scale training of senior administrative officers such as Principal Census Officers, District Census Officers, and Charge Officers. Training programmes for Master Trainers, Field Trainers, enumerators, and supervisors will be conducted ahead of the first phase.

On data security, Sharma assured that robust safeguards, including end-to-end encryption, secure data transmission, and certified data centres designated as Critical Information Infrastructure, have been put in place to ensure complete protection of personal information.

Urging public participation, Sharma said accurate data collection will play a crucial role in shaping the future development trajectory of Ladakh.

## Two-day Trans-Himalayan Urban Climate conclave begins in Leh



Photo Caption: Participants during the two-day Trans-Himalayan Urban Climate conclave in Leh.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** A two-day Trans-Himalayan Urban Climate Conclave, themed "Advancing Climate-Resilient and Net-Zero Pathways for Himalayan Cities," commenced in Leh on April 10.

The conclave is being organised by the Housing and Urban Development Department (HUDD), UT Ladakh, in collaboration with Municipal Committee Leh, Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG), German Cooperation, and BORDA South Asia.

The conclave aims to enable Himalayan towns to build climate-resilient, finance-ready urban systems by focusing on tools such as MRV frameworks, carbon markets, and sustainable infrastructure solutions tailored to fragile mountain ecosystems.

Director, HUDD, UT Ladakh, Nitish Rajori (IAS), highlighted Ladakh's unique development challenges and opportunities. He emphasised the need for a holistic, sustainable, and livelihood-oriented development approach, noting that rapid urbanisation, increased tourism, and changing climate patterns are placing pressure on Ladakh's natural resources, particularly water and energy systems.

In his keynote address, Secretary, Tourism Department, Sanjeet Rodrigues, underscored the importance of collaboration among policymakers, experts, and institutions to chart a sustainable pathway for Ladakh. He highlighted Ladakh's potential in renewable energy, especially solar and wind, and stressed the need for people-centric, environmentally responsible development. He also outlined ongoing and planned initiatives in areas such as water management, sanitation, and sustainable urban infrastructure, while calling for continued knowledge sharing and technical support from partner organisations.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary, Power Development Department, Rudra Goud P.T., emphasised the significance of achieving net-zero targets in Ladakh's unique terrain. He noted the challenges posed by extreme climatic con-

ditions, connectivity constraints, and seasonal variations, and stressed the importance of adopting renewable energy solutions, energy-efficient infrastructure, and climate-responsive building designs.

The conclave featured a series of technical sessions and expert interactions focusing on climate resilience, urban planning, and sustainable development in Himalayan regions. Experts discussed policy frameworks for enabling net-zero cities, challenges of infrastructure development in high-altitude areas, and the importance of locally adapted, decentralised solutions. Key themes included water scarcity, waste management, energy efficiency, and the need to integrate traditional knowledge with modern technologies.

A major focus of the conclave was on climate finance and carbon markets, exploring how cities can mobilise financial resources for sustainable urban development. Discussions highlighted the role of voluntary carbon markets, innovative financing mechanisms, and blended finance in supporting climate-resilient infrastructure in smaller and remote urban centres.

The conclave also included panel discussions on governance models for climate resilience, carbon market scaling, and urban climate finance, with participation from experts representing national and international organisations. The deliberations focused on identifying actionable strategies, strengthening institutional frameworks, and promoting innovation in climate action for mountain cities.

The event witnessed participation from senior officials of the UT Administration, representatives from academic and research institutions, international organisations, civil society groups, and domain experts from across the country and abroad.

Among those present were Secretary, Law and Justice, Tariq Mehmood Qureshi, representatives of religious and community organisations, including the All-Buddhist Association Leh, and other stakeholders.

## The World of Juniors

World Book Day is celebrated on 23 April because the date has strong literary importance. UNESCO selected it in 1995 as a tribute to books and authors, and it is associated with Miguel de Cervantes, William Shakespeare, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, among other literary figures. The observance also traces part of its inspiration to Spain, where a book celebration was linked to Cervantes and later merged in Catalonia with the popular tradition of books and roses on Saint George's Day.

The history of world book day has two major phases:

### 1. Spanish Origin

The original idea was proposed in 1922 by Vicente Clavel in Barcelona to honour Miguel de Cervantes and encourage book sales. It was first celebrated in Spain in 1926 and later moved to 23 April.

### 2. UNESCO Global Observance

In 1995, UNESCO officially established World Book and Copyright Day on 23 April, turning it into a worldwide celebration of reading, authors, and books.

One of the most important parts of World Book and Copyright Day is



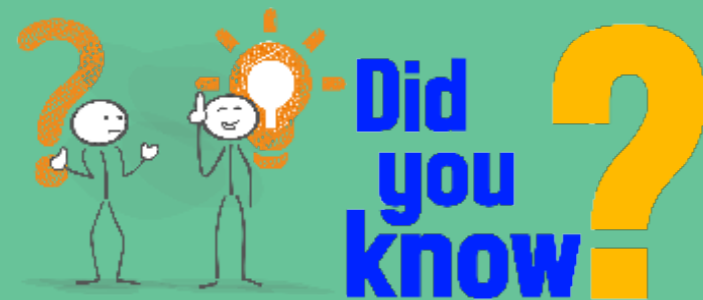
UNESCO's World Book Capital initiative. Every year, UNESCO and international organizations representing publishers, libraries, booksellers, and authors choose a city that will promote books and reading through year-long activities.

### World Book Capital 2025 and 2026

- 2025: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2026: Rabat, Morocco

UNESCO says Rabat's 2026 programme will focus on improving access to books, supporting the local publishing industry, and strengthening literacy for all citizens. Whether you celebrate by reading a new book, visiting a library, exchanging books with friends, or helping a child discover reading, world book day is the perfect time to honour the joy and power of books.

Courtesy: Vedantu



- The closest living relative to humans are chimpanzees, bonobos, and gorillas. We share between 98 and 99.6% of DNA with these species. Gorillas can even catch colds from humans.

- Most of the Earth's longest-surviving species are found in the ocean. While cyanobacteria are technically the oldest living organisms on Earth, having appeared 2.8 billion years ago, the ocean sponge has also been on Earth for 580 million years, and jellyfish have been here for 550 million years.

- The Amazon rainforest is an amazing place. The Amazon produces over 20% of the world's oxygen, and contains more than half of the world's species of plants, animals, and insects.

- Many animals exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence. For

example, cows form bonds akin to friendships, and often have a "best friend," and Gentoo Penguins bring a potential mate a pebble to "propose."

- The U.S. Constitution was signed on September 17th, 1787. It was meant not to "grant" rights, but to protect the rights people were born with.

- Until 1992, female athletes competing in the Olympics had to undergo mandatory sex verification testing, due to fears that male athletes would disguise themselves as female to gain an advantage. The Olympic Committee still maintains the right to conduct testing if "suspicions arise." There were no such requirements for male athletes.

- Basketball legend Michael Jordan also played baseball, and allegedly still received his basketball salary while a member of the Chicago White Sox system.

- Queen Elizabeth II is the longest-serving British monarch. She has been on the throne for 67 years. The 93 year old queen's heir is currently her son Charles, who is 70.

Courtesy: blog.prepscholar.com

## SoulSpeak

Dr. P.P. Wangchuk

### The art of living all alone



The art of living all alone is quite a difficult task. But, when trained well, you get 'liberated' from the pangs of life. And, mind you, it is not running away from the challenges of life. It is rather a way of helping yourself in facing the challenges of life, and to make your journey on this planet have a smooth sailing!

Let us make it clear that living alone is not the same as living lonely. It is all about being comfortable with yourself by finding space for yourself. It helps you do the things of your interest and love besides helping you see your real self and find out happiness.

A big advantage of living alone is that it boosts your morale and you get confident of your real strength and ability.

Today's world is full of conflicts and distractions, and you need to be left alone to find some space for yourself. Living alone helps you in several ways like making your journey of life fruitful and meaningful. Such a state of body and mind helps you recharge and refocus, discover new interests and passions, and develop a stronger sense of yourself. And, what is greater is that it helps you develop and improve your mental and overall well-being.

So, the crucial point is to find out the ways and the means to get into solitude by mastering the art of being all alone. The beginning is to embrace solitude by developing newer and fruitful hobbies like solo walk, reading rare and classical and philosophical books. You can also try to get into practising mindfulness by focusing on the present moment and let go of the distracting factors. Also, a crucial point is to tell yourself that you have to be kind and loving towards yourself.

And then also go for newer interests like going on solo travelling far and wide on a regular basis. One more thing to remember is to develop new skills so that you are not left behind in today's fast-changing world. Today's world is for those who are skilled and not for the well-educated!

The basic purpose of being alone can be summarised like this: You will love yourself and your self-confidence will get a boost. Also, your relation with others will get a big boost. You will develop a stronger sense of purpose, and then happiness and fulfilment will come your way!

Courtesy: WongWorld

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

## Fortnightly News

### In Conversation with

# Phuntsog Angchuk, Founder, Ladakh Rocks and Minerals, Preservation Study and Museum

**Q. Can you tell us about your journey and what inspired you to establish the Ladakh Rocks and Minerals Preservation Study and Museum?**

Thank you for having me in this interview. My journey began with a deep interest in the natural image formations found on rocks. Gradually, this curiosity led me to explore the mountains and valleys of Ladakh, where I started collecting different types of rocks. Over time, I gained experience and developed an understanding of their varieties and significance.

I am 59 years old now, and I began collecting rocks at the age of 25. By 2014, my collection had grown so large that I no longer had space to keep it at home. This inspired me to establish the Ladakh Rocks and Minerals Museum, with the aim of displaying these specimens and creating awareness among the people of Ladakh about the geological wealth around them.

Many of us live in the mountains, yet we know very little about the rocks that surround us. While there are museums showcasing art, crafts, and culture, there was no dedicated space to exhibit the rocks and minerals found in Ladakh. I felt a strong need to fill this gap.

Ladakh is uniquely blessed with an abundance of rocks, minerals, semi-precious and precious stones, fossils, and remarkable geomorphological features—most of which remain unknown to the wider world. The museum aspires to preserve and showcase this rich geoheritage for the benefit of society through education, research, tourism, and sustainable development.

All the specimens in the museum have been ethically and carefully collected from the Himalayan region, predominantly Ladakh, ensuring authenticity and scientific value. My main objective is to preserve this natural treasure and educate students, researchers, geologists, gemologists, mineralogists, and tourists about rocks, minerals, meteorites, and fossils.

The museum has been registered as a trust so that it continues to exist even after me. My vision is that it will serve as a lasting institution for learning and awareness for future generations.

**Q. Why is it important to create awareness about rocks and geology in Ladakh?**

In Ladakh, many people do not have much knowledge about

*Interviewed by Stanzin Dasal*



### MESSAGE TO THE READERS

“ I encourage everyone, especially the youth, to explore and understand Ladakh’s rich natural heritage. Our rocks, minerals, and fossils are valuable treasures that tell the story of our land. Let us preserve and promote this knowledge for future generations. ”

rocks. Most of us simply think that rocks are just ordinary stones, without realizing their diversity and significance. In reality, rocks are broadly classified into three types, and within these categories, there are many different varieties.

Ladakh is a land of rare geological importance, with its unique topography shaped by the Himalayan and Karakoram mountain ranges. Geologically, the region can be divided into five major tectonic belts from north to south: the Karakoram Belt, Shayok Belt, Ladakh Granite Belt, Indian Belt, and the Suru Crystalline Belt. These belts represent a remarkable range of rock types from the Precambrian to the Tertiary age.

One of the most significant features of this region is the presence of a mélangé zone along the boundary of the Indian and Asian tectonic plates. This zone contains veins rich in valuable minerals and fossils, which contribute to the colourful and diverse mountain landscapes of Ladakh.

This geological richness is of great significance not only for the people of Ladakh but also for students, researchers, youth, and tourists. It helps them understand that Ladakh is not just culturally rich but also a treasure trove of rocks, minerals, and fossils.

In our museum, we have preserved around 300 varieties of rocks and minerals found in Ladakh, with the aim of educating people and creating awareness about this unique natural heritage.

**Q. What challenges have you faced in collecting rocks across Ladakh?**

Collecting rocks from different places involves significant cost and comes with many challenges. I began my career as a teacher, but later left the job and started working as an LIC agent, which allowed me to travel across various parts of Ladakh. While my primary role was to educate people about life insurance, it also gave me the opportunity to explore different regions and search for unique rocks.

Even today, I continue to go on such trips whenever possible. Although it requires considerable expenditure, it gives me immense happiness and satisfaction to pursue what I truly love.

Of course, the journey has not been without risks. There have been difficult and dangerous situations for instance, I once fell into an ice crevasse and suffered frostbite on my face. Despite such challenges, nothing has been able to stop me from continuing this passion. When you truly love what you do, you

*...continues on page 6*

## Fortnight Highlights



A special interactive session with renowned Indian astronaut Shri Shubhanshu Shukla, Ashok Chakra, was held today at Eliezer Joldan Memorial (EJM) College, Leh, bringing together students from various schools and colleges of both Leh and Kargil districts for an inspiring and educational engagement on space science, exploration, and future opportunities in the field.



As per the directions of the District Programme Officer, ICDS Project, Leh, the ICDS Project Khaltse successfully launched Poshan Pakhwada, marking the commencement of nutrition awareness activities across the Sub-Division.



Poshan Pakhwada, an event was successfully conducted at Chuchot with the active participation of more than 80 individuals, including Poshan Leaders (PLs), Nutrition Mobilizers (NMs), Aanganwadi Workers (AGs), and community members. Nutritionist also addressed the gathering, creating awareness about the importance of a balanced diet and good nutrition for overall well-being.



The Horticulture Department, Union Territory of Ladakh, and National Co-operative Exports Limited (NCEL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote export of Ladakh’s agricultural and allied produce.



In a remarkable display of solidarity, residents of Gound Mangal Pore (GMPore) in Kargil organised a community-led donation drive to support people in Iran, with an unusual auction drawing widespread attention. A chicken, contributed by a local resident as a symbolic offering was auctioned for ₹1.25 lakh, turning a modest donation into a powerful symbol of compassion and collective spirit.



A special interactive session with renowned Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla, Ashok Chakra, was held on April 1 at Eliezer Joldan Memorial (EJM) College, Leh, bringing together students from various schools and colleges of both Leh and Kargil districts for an inspiring and educational engagement on space science, exploration, and future opportunities in the field.



Under the Administration at Doorstep initiative, the “JungsJabs” programme was conducted on April 9 at Charasa village in Nubra Sub-Division under the leadership of Tehsildar Sumoor, Tashi Jorgais.



Chief Secretary of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, chaired the third UT-level Coordination Committee meeting for the forthcoming Holy Exposition of the sacred relics of Tathagata Buddha at the Dharma Centre, Choglamzar.

## Fortnightly News

### In Conversation with Phuntsog Angchuk, Founder, Ladakh Rocks and Minerals, Preservation Study and Museum

...Continuity of page 5

find the strength to keep going.

**Q. You have submitted a project to the Ladakh Administration for establishing a museum. Could you tell us about it and the challenges you are facing?**

Yes, I have proposed a project to the Ladakh Administration requesting land on lease to construct a dedicated museum in a mandala-shaped design. The proposed museum will house around 200 distinct types and over 1,000 specimens of rocks, minerals, and fossils, all sourced from the Himalayan region, especially Ladakh.

The vision is not just to create a display space, but a comprehensive educational and research institution. The museum will include classrooms, seminar halls, and laboratories for teaching, hands-on mineral study, and research. It will also have a library and digital archives with national and international geological publications, along with hostel facilities for visiting students, faculty, and research scholars.

The project is designed to have a strong socio-economic and scientific impact. It aims to promote geotourism and boost Ladakh's local economy by attracting scientists, researchers, and tourists. It will also create employment opportunities for local youth and artisans, contributing to skill development and livelihood generation. At the same time, it will support scientific studies in mineralogy, Himalayan geology, biodiversity, and even traditional medicine. Another important aspect of the project is community welfare. A portion of the museum's revenue is planned to be allocated for supporting underprivileged students, healthcare initiatives, and elderly citizens.

The museum complex itself will include several attractions such as a rock garden displaying Himalayan specimens along with an interactive geographical map, permanent and temporary exhibition halls for minerals, fossils, meteorites, and rock art, and a resource centre for traditional medicine and mineral-based therapies. It will also provide opportunities for young entrepreneurs through rock cutting and polishing studios, souvenir shops, and other skill-based activities, along with a café offering Ladakhi hospitality.

In addition, the museum will actively engage with educational institutions through school and college outreach programmes, guided field tours, awareness sessions, and geology camps. Training workshops will also be organised for unemployed youth, focusing on skills such as gemstone craftsmanship, museum curation, and guided tourism.

As for challenges, the biggest hurdle has been securing land and necessary approvals. Such a large-scale project requires strong institutional support, funding, and coordination. However, I remain hopeful and committed to turning this vision into reality for the benefit of Ladakh and future generations.

**Q. What would you like to say about the people who visit your museum?**

The museum is truly appreciated by everyone who visits it. Many tourists have told me that their trip to Ladakh feels incomplete without visiting the museum, and that means a lot to me. Such feedback and appreciation are a great source of encouragement and motivate me to continue my work.

If I am able to secure land and develop the museum with all the planned facilities, it will become an even bigger attraction for tourists and a valuable asset for the people of Ladakh.

### Apricot Blossom Festival 2026 draws tourists to Kargil's blooming orchards



Photo Caption: Tourists walking in the blooming apricot orchards in Kargil.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** As part of a series of events held across the Union Territory of Ladakh under the ongoing Apricot Blossom Festival 2026, the Tourism Department Kargil curated a wide range of activities across the picturesque apricot belt of Karkitchoo, Chanigund, Hardass, Handurman, Kharoul, Shilikchey, and adjoining villages on April 12.

The festival, celebrating one of nature's most enchanting seasons, continues to captivate visitors with a vibrant blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and immersive tourism experiences.

Set against the breathtaking backdrop of blooming apricot orchards in Karkitchoo and nearby villages, tourists were offered guided village walks, heritage trails, and scenic cycling rides, enabling them to engage closely with the region's pristine environment and living traditions.

The experience was further enriched by stalls showcasing handloom and handicraft products, apricot-based delicacies, and other local food items. Interactive storytelling sessions by local elders and cultural interpreters provided insights into the region's history, folklore, and lifestyle.

For adventure enthusiasts, soft adventure activities such as nature hikes, short trekking routes, and riverside leisure experiences were also included, making the programme a comprehensive offering for all categories of tourists.

Visitors were also taken on guided heritage tours to

prominent attractions in the area, including the Harka Bahadur War Memorial, petroglyph sites, Sangam, and the orchards of Omachikthang near Kharoul, as well as Handurman Heritage Village and the Border View Point.

Tourists were enthralled by orchard picnics and blossom-viewing spots, where photography enthusiasts and nature lovers captured the fleeting beauty of spring. Hands-on experiences such as traditional cooking demonstrations and tasting sessions of apricot-based dishes added a delightful sensory dimension to the festival.

A significant influx of both domestic and international tourists added to the festive atmosphere, with visitors expressing awe at the surreal beauty of the apricot bloom and the warm hospitality of local communities. Director Tourism Ladakh, Tsering Paldan, along with Assistant Director Tourism Kargil, Muhammad Ali Tak, and other officials, interacted with tourists, travel trade stakeholders, social media influencers, and vloggers. They encouraged them to promote Ladakh's apricot blossom season on national and international platforms, highlighting Kargil as a unique springtime destination offering authentic and immersive experiences.

Members of travel trade associations, representatives of travel agencies, and volunteers were felicitated for their valuable contribution to tourism promotion and their efforts in attracting visitors to Kargil and strengthening Ladakh's tourism profile.

### Shilikchay villagers raise irrigation canal damage; LAHDC Chief orders swift restoration



Photo Caption: A delegation of villagers from Kako Shilikchay with the Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoun.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** A delegation of villagers from Kako Shilikchay called on the Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, on April 10 to apprise him of issues concerning damage to their irrigation canal (kul).

The delegation informed that the canal, located adjacent to the river and the National Highway, has been damaged due to the ongoing construction of a bridge and the widening of the highway. They highlighted that the disruption has adversely affected irrigation, particularly during the ongoing farming season, and urged immediate intervention to ensure temporary wa-

ter supply arrangements.

Taking prompt cognisance of the matter, the Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor directed the Executive Engineer, R&B, to restore water supply through a bypass from Baltibazar within one week as a temporary relief measure.

Dr. Akhoun further instructed officials of the Revenue Department to take up the matter with the Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Kargil, and ensure that the related dispute is resolved within a week.

He also directed the BRO/GREF authorities to immediately clear boulders and debris deposited downstream in the canal to facilitate the smooth flow of water.

Additionally, the Chief Executive Councillor instructed the Executive Engineer, Irrigation and Flood Control, to conduct a detailed assessment of the damaged canal and prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for debris removal and necessary minor restoration works. The meeting was attended by Councillor Town Haji Abass; Executive Engineer, R&B; Executive Engineer, Irrigation and Flood Control; the Naib Tehsildar from the Revenue Department; officials from GREF/BRO; and other concerned officers, along with members of the delegation.

Dr. Akhoun assured the delegation that all necessary measures would be taken on priority to address the issue and safeguard the agricultural interests of the villagers.

### DC Kargil reviews preparations for Khelo India programme



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** A meeting was convened under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner/CEO, LAHDC Kargil, Rakesh Kumar, on April 9 at NIC Hall, Kargil, to deliberate on the upcoming Khelo India initiative and related activities.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Ghulam Mohammad, Additional Deputy Commissioner Shabir Hussain, District Youth Services & Sports Officer, District Social Welfare Officer, and In-charge SAI Centre, Kargil.

Detailed discussions were held on planning, coordination, and effective implementation of the Khelo India programme in the district, with emphasis on promoting sports at the grassroots level and ensuring active participation of youth across Kargil.

The Deputy Commissioner directed that special tournaments be organised for specially-abled individuals to ensure inclusivity in sports activities. He also empha-

sised that ongoing tournaments at Biamathang Ground should not be disrupted. Accordingly, the Youth Services & Sports Department was instructed to conduct semi-final and final matches at Biamathang, while remaining matches may be held at alternate venues such as Sharjah and Kaksar grounds, as well as other available locations. He further advised utilising school playgrounds wherever feasible.

Additionally, he stressed the importance of organising tournaments under the SPAN scheme, aimed at promoting peace and harmony, and directed that women and girls be actively included in all such sporting activities. He also encouraged the inclusion of diverse disciplines such as boxing, weightlifting, and other feasible sports to ensure wider participation.

The chair underscored the importance of inter-departmental coordination for the smooth execution of all proposed activities and directed concerned officers to take necessary steps for timely implementation.

### Pema Care founder pitches wellness centre in Zanskar CEC Kargil backs initiative to strengthen community-based healthcare



Photo Caption: Pema Chosdon from Nerok, Zanskar, Founder of Pema Care with CEC, LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoun and Executive Councillor, Er. Phunchok Tashi, at the Council Secretariat Kargil.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** Pema Chosdon from Nerok, Zanskar, Founder of Pema Care on April 10 called on CEC, LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, along with Executive Councillor and Zanskar Development Authority representative, Er. Phunchok Tashi, at the Council Secretariat Kargil.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on strengthening access to organic and Ayurvedic healthcare services in the Kargil district.

Pema Chosdon shared her vision of establishing a holistic heritage wellness centre in the region, aimed at promoting traditional healing practices, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing overall community well-being.

The deliberations also highlighted the efforts of Pema Care in developing an inclusive and sustainable model for wellness and community development, with a focus on local participation and long-term impact.

CEC appreciated the initiative and acknowledged its potential to create meaningful impact by improving access to healthcare while simultaneously generating livelihood opportunities for the local population. He emphasized that such innovative approaches could significantly contribute to the socio-economic development of remote areas of Kargil especially like Zanskar and other regions of Kargil.

The meeting further explored avenues for collaboration and institutional support from LAHDC Kargil. CEC assured that the Council would extend all possible support and play a proactive and innovative role in promoting such initiatives in the region.

Pema Chosdon expressed her gratitude to the CEC and the Executive Councillor for their encouraging and forward-looking approach towards strengthening traditional and community-based healthcare systems.

## Fortnightly News

### Khidmat-e-Awaam outreach programme held at Matayen, Drass



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**DRASS:** A public outreach programme titled “Khidmat-e-Awaam” was successfully organised on April 10 at Matayen in Drass Subdivision of Kargil district, witnessing significant participation from local residents as well as officials from various government departments.

The programme was organised by the District Administration with the objective of promoting good governance and ensuring the delivery of government services at the doorstep of the people. The initiative was conducted under the directions of the Chief Secretary of Ladakh as part of the ongoing district-wide outreach programmes being held under the aegis of Khidmat-e-Awaam.

The programme was convened under the supervision of Sub-Divisional Magistrate Vishal Atri. During the interaction, residents actively participated and projected several developmental demands. Prominent issues raised included the construction of an irrigation canal and the establishment of a Medical Sub-Centre at Matayen.

Officials from various line departments interacted with the public, listened to their concerns, and assured appropriate follow-up action. The programme provided an important platform for direct engagement between the administration and the local population.

The District Administration reiterated its commitment to strengthening public service delivery and ensuring that government services reach every corner of the district through such outreach initiatives.

The Department of Sheep Husbandry, Drass, conducted awareness sessions on various schemes for the protection and rearing of livestock. The CDPO, ICDS Drass, sensitised the public on maintaining hygiene and ensuring proper nutrition for children. J&K Bank, Drass, also provided financial awareness and informed residents about various banking services.

At the conclusion of the programme, the SDM Drass directed all sectoral officers to attend Khidmat-e-Awaam events every Wednesday and ensure effective service delivery to the public.

### DLSA, District Health Society organise free health camp on World Health Day



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** On the occasion of World Health Day, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Kargil, under the aegis of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority, organised a free medical camp on April 7 in collaboration with the District Health Society, Kargil, at the District Court Complex, Kurbathang.

The camp was inaugurated by Sheikh Gowher Husain, Principal District & Sessions Judge and Chairman, District Legal Services Authority, Kargil, in the presence of Sadiq Ali Wazir, Munsiff JMJC Sankoo, members of the Bar Association Kargil, Legal Aid Defence Counsels, court staff, para legal volun-

teers, and members of the general public.

The medical team included Dr. Hannan Wani and Dr. Murakeen, along with a pharmacist, Community Health Officer (CHO), lab assistants, and paramedical staff.

The free medical camp offered a wide range of diagnostic and screening services, including haemoglobin testing, random blood sugar, hypertension screening, liver and kidney function tests (LFT and KFT), urine routine tests, oral cancer screening, sputum tests for TB/AFB, VIA-based cervical cancer screening, breast cancer screening, dental consultation, and cataract screening.

A total of around 115 individuals were examined during the camp. Samples were collected for various diagnostic tests. Among the beneficiaries, 15 women were screened for breast cancer, around 17 individuals underwent dental consultations and oral cancer screening, and 33 people availed vision and cataract screening services.

The initiative aimed to promote health awareness and provide accessible medical services to the public, marking a meaningful observance of World Health Day.

### L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena visits University of Ladakh Campus at Taru



Photo Caption: Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena planting a sapling under the “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” initiative at Ladakh university campus.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**TARU:** Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, visited the University of Ladakh campus at Taru on April 6 to review academic, research and infrastructure facilities, and to interact with faculty and students.

The Lieutenant Governor was accorded a warm welcome by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Saket Kushwaha, Administrative Secretary, Higher Education, Bhanu Prabha, and faculty members.

During his visit, Saxena planted a sapling under the “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” initiative, reiterating his commitment to environmental conservation. He visited the Central Library and the Artificial Intelligence Data Centre, and inspected exhibition stalls showcasing locally developed agricultural and technological products, including medicinal plants and millet-based items.

At the AWaDH Centre, the Lieutenant Governor witnessed a demonstration of Ladakh-specific Modelling and Space Applications (LAMA), along with a presentation by students of the Forensic Science Laboratory, who demonstrated sample collection, mapping, and on-the-spot testing techniques. He commended the professionalism and technical competence displayed by the students. Saxena also visited the Science Block, where he interacted with students and assured them that the UT Administration would take necessary measures for their welfare, including facilitating exposure visits to reputed institutions across the country.

Addressing faculty and staff, the Lieutenant Governor expressed satisfaction with the infrastructure and academic environment at the University, describing the laboratories

and facilities as exemplary. He noted that the University holds immense potential for growth and encouraged further strengthening of specialised areas such as forensic sciences.

Highlighting recent reforms in the criminal justice system through the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA), he emphasised the growing importance of scientific evidence in investigations and the need to enhance capacity in forensic science laboratories.

Praising the LAMA initiative, Saxena observed that such data-driven modelling systems would assist the UT Administration in evidence-based planning and decision-making. He also highlighted the advanced laboratory facilities at the University, noting their potential in identifying mineral resources in Ladakh, which he described as a region rich in untapped mineral wealth.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised Ladakh’s vast opportunities in sectors such as tourism, the food industry, handicrafts, handloom and floriculture. He remarked that only a fraction of the region’s tourism potential has been explored and called for concerted efforts to develop Ladakh into a global tourism hub, with active support from the University.

He underscored the need to curb student migration from Ladakh to other states by strengthening local institutions. Noting that studying outside the region can place financial strain on families and expose students to challenges, he stressed the importance of enhancing academic standards and expanding course offerings to attract both local and outstation students.

Saxena added that increased student footfall from outside Ladakh would help dispel misconceptions about the region’s climate and terrain, while also boosting tourism. With the onset of the tourist season, he informed that the number of daily flights to Ladakh is being increased from eight to eighteen in April, with additional flights under consideration to further boost tourist inflow.

Outlining his vision, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised the development of the University of Ladakh as a “Green University.” He called for sustained plantation drives and sought the institution’s active cooperation in achieving the target of increasing Ladakh’s green cover to five percent within the next two years.

He concluded by assuring full support from the UT Administration in strengthening the University and transforming it into one of the country’s premier institutions, equipped with world-class infrastructure and modern teaching facilities.

### Chief Secretary reviews innovation projects at NIELIT, Leh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**LEH:** Chief Secretary of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, visited National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), Leh on April 8 reviewed ongoing innovation projects and assess various institutional initiatives.

He was accompanied by the Secretary, School Education, Bhanu Prabha, the Director, NIELIT, Phuntsog Toldan, and other senior officials.

During the visit, Director NIELIT, Phuntsog Toldan, delivered a comprehensive presentation highlighting the institute’s key activities, including its introduction, Research and Development, capacity-building programmes, and efforts towards fostering a startup ecosystem in Ladakh.

The Chief Secretary was also briefed on several digital portals and applications developed by NIELIT. These included the LAHDC Permit Portal, the Bodhi App—an AI-based language application, KHORLO App, an AI-enabled taxi booking platform and 1st Ladakhi Large Language Model.

The presentation also covered ongoing innovations and future projects being developed by the institute, like Bidirectional Solar Electric Vehicle with AI-based TERRAIN detection and ADAPTIVE TORQUE CONTROL, IoT-based smart apricot and vegetable dryer, solar Peltier-based hot and cold storage system, IoT-based beer detection system for Kargil, all-in-one solar generator and many more.

Emphasising the importance of nurturing innovation at the grassroots level, the Chief Secretary stressed the need for establishing parallel laboratory setups in colleges to enhance practical learning and technological exposure for students.

Later, the Chief Secretary visited the institute’s laboratories, where Interns demonstrated their ongoing and completed projects. He interacted with the students and appreciated their efforts, encouraging them to continue contributing towards innovation and technological advancement in the region.

### DC Kargil chairs meet on decongestion, smart mobility and urban reforms



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** A meeting on traffic decongestion and urban mobility was convened on April 9 under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner/CEO, LAH-DC Kargil, Rakesh Kumar (IAS).

The meeting focused on addressing the growing problem of traffic congestion in Kargil town and explored measures to improve urban mobility, public convenience, and overall town planning.

Detailed discussions were held on the removal of encroachments, streamlining parking facilities for transport unions, and developing adequate infrastructure for tourists in and around the town. The status and management of truck stands were also reviewed, with emphasis on ensuring smooth and regulated traffic movement within and outside the town.

The Deputy Commissioner directed strict action against encroachments and instructed concerned

departments, particularly Revenue and Municipal authorities, to undertake their removal in a planned and systematic manner.

Issues related to shifting of bus stands and regulation of bus movement were also discussed. The Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for improved road planning and effective implementation of smart city initiatives to strengthen urban management. The installation of solar-based temporary traffic signals and improved lighting arrangements was also proposed to enhance traffic regulation.

Further, emphasis was laid on promoting road safety awareness among the public. A key proposal discussed during the meeting included the provision of free bus services for differently-abled persons and students to ensure inclusive and accessible transportation.

The meeting was attended by the Senior Superintendent of Police, Kargil; Project Officer, Wages (ACD); Executive Engineer, PWD Circle; Deputy Superintendent of Police (Traffic); Executive Engineers of PHE, R&B-II, and PDD; representatives of the Municipal Committee Kargil; and the Assistant Regional Transport Officer.

The Deputy Commissioner underscored the importance of inter-departmental coordination and timely action to effectively address traffic challenges and improve Kargil’s urban infrastructure.

### Director School Education Ladakh visits DIET Kargil, holds interactive meeting with faculty



Photo Caption: Director School Education Ladakh, Imteaz Kacho during his official visit to DIET Kargil.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

**KARGIL:** Director School Education Ladakh, Imteaz Kacho, paid an official visit to DIET Kargil on April 7, where he held an interactive meeting with faculty members and reviewed the overall functioning and progress of the institute.

The visit commenced with a warm reception by the DIET faculty under the leadership of Principal S.D. Namgail. This was followed by a demonstration of a Science Activity Kit by faculty member Mehboob Ali, showcasing innovative teaching-learning practices for upcoming DIET activities in schools.

During the meeting, Dr. Willayat Ali delivered a comprehensive presentation highlighting the institute’s work during the academic session 2025–26. The presentation covered key areas including in-service teacher training programmes, the status of ongoing national educational projects and schemes, institutional roles, major activities undertaken, identified gaps, and future priorities.

This was followed by an open discussion in which faculty members shared key challenges and concerns across various domains. The Principal also outlined the roadmap and key focus areas for the upcoming academic session 2026–27.

In his address, Imteaz Kacho commended the institutional growth of DIET Kargil, noting its transformation from a teacher training school into a robust academic hub. He expressed concern over the de-

clining culture of book reading in the age of generative AI and digital technology, stating, “While technology is a vital tool, students must cultivate a love for reading books. Our teachers and teacher educators must act as mentors in this digital transition.”

He further emphasised that as students become more innovative and talented, the capacity of DIET faculty must expand to meet these evolving needs. The Director also assured timely support in addressing key issues raised by the institute, including the need for additional land to develop a DIET of Excellence and expand academic initiatives. He expressed his commitment to ensuring better coordination and more frequent institutional visits in the future.

Following the meeting, the Director visited various sections of DIET Kargil, including the studio and the Balvatika Model Lab, and appreciated the work being carried out. Faculty members briefed him on the functioning of different wings: Gulzar Danish spoke about the studio initiatives; Dr. Willayat Ali explained the Balvatika Lab; while Mohammad and Yahya highlighted the work and challenges related to the Assessment Section and Community Radio.

Principal S.D. Namgail expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Director for his visit and continued support to the institution.



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