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NOVEMBER 16-30, 2026

REACH LADAKH BULLETIN



In Conversation with
Padma Angmo, Author

In Focus:
Chhang tradition to alcohol-free Ladakh:
A changing social debate

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From zero enrolment to 42 students: How Taru community brought its school back to life

Once closed in 2019, Government Middle School Taru has made a remarkable comeback through collective community efforts, youth participation and renewed faith in public education.

Stanzin Dasal

TARU: At a time when the closure of government schools has become a growing concern in Ladakh, the revival of Government Middle School Taru stands as an encouraging example of what community participation and collective determination can achieve.

Established in the late 1950s, Government Middle School Taru was among the oldest schools in Ladakh. After serving generations of students, however, the school was closed in 2019 due to zero student enrolment. All teachers and staff posted there were subsequently transferred to other institutions, leaving behind a school that had once been an important part of the village's educational landscape.

For the people of Taru, the closure was not merely the loss of an educational institution but also the loss of an important community asset. Concerned about the future of education in the village, local youth and residents began discussing ways to restore the school and bring children back to public education.

One of those who took an active role in the initiative was Sonam Angchuk, popularly known as Soso, a government schoolteacher then posted at Government High School Urgo. Along with other local youth and residents, he helped initiate discussions, mobilise support and understand the reasons behind the school's closure.

"I started discussing the issue with local youth and mobilising the community about the importance of having our own school. I also tried to understand the reasons that had led to its closure," he recalled.

At the time, Angchuk was actively associated with the village youth association, Geskul Tsogspa Taru, which worked towards the cultural and educational development of the village. The association became an important platform for bringing residents together and building consensus on the need to revive the school.

As discussions progressed, the community began addressing the challenges one by one. Realising that reopening the institution would require both public and institutional support, villagers approached former Ladakh University Vice-Chancellor S.K. Mehta for assistance. His support came in the form of a free school bus and two primary-level teachers, helping address some of the major concerns surrounding the school's revival.



Photo Caption: Students and teachers of Government Middle School Taru.

The community also approached the Education Department, seeking cooperation from Zonal Education Officer Leh Arun Tharchin, Chief Education Officer Leh S.D. Namgyal, Deputy Chairman Tsering Angchuk and other officials. The collective efforts of residents, local youth and education officials gradually paved the way for reopening the institution.

After sustained efforts and consultations, the school reopened in 2022 with 11 students.

Although the reopening was an encouraging beginning, enrolment remained low, and the Education Department was initially uncertain about the school's long-term prospects. The community, however, remained committed to demonstrating that the institution could regain parents' confidence and become a viable educational centre once again.

Angchuk, who was closely involved in the revival efforts, took the responsibility of working towards increasing enrolment. "I personally assured the department that I would increase the enrolment to 30 students the following year. Even Director School Education Safdar Ali encouraged me, saying that he would give me an award if I managed to achieve the target," he recalled.

The efforts soon began showing results. In 2023, the school enrolled 32 students, surpassing the target.

That year also marked another significant achievement, with students securing first position in science exhibitions at the zonal, district and Union Territory levels. The accomplishment helped change perceptions about the school's academic potential and gradually restored parents' confidence in the institution.

From zero enrolment in 2019, Government Middle School Taru has today grown to a strength of 42 students, all from the local community.

The school's progress has been supported by continued community participation and the involvement of local residents in its development. Its consistent performance in competitions and activities organised at different levels has further demonstrated that government schools in rural areas can also provide opportunities for academic excellence when supported by a committed community and dedicated teachers.

For the people of Taru, the biggest achievement goes beyond the increase in enrolment. The revival has restored a sense of collective ownership and strengthened the relationship between the school and the village.

The renewed confidence has also strengthened Angchuk's connection with the institution. With the trust and support of villagers, he was requested to continue serving at the school for an extended tenure. He continues to play an important role in connecting the local community with the Education Department and addressing their respective concerns and aspirations.

The reopening has brought a noticeable change in the village. Residents have become more conscious of educational matters and increasingly willing to contribute to the institution's development. What was once a closed school has gradually become a shared community responsibility.

Adding to this transformation, a new school building estimated to cost Rs 5 crore is currently under construction, promising better infrastructure and facilities. The school has also begun attracting interest beyond the village, with children of several university staff members reportedly enrolling there.

The journey of Government Middle School Taru demonstrates that the closure of a school need not mark the end of its story. With collective determination, community participation, institutional cooperation and the commitment of teachers, an educational institution can regain its place in society.

From zero enrolment to 42 students, Taru's experience is not just the story of a school reopening; it is an example of how a community came together to reclaim an important institution and restore faith in public education.

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Chief Secretary Ladakh calls for active public participation in upcoming elections, assures stakeholder consultations on key policy matters



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, IAS on November 10 addressed a press conference on the forthcoming Panchayat, Municipal Council and Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) elections, besides addressing key policy matters concerning the Excise Policy and Nautor Land Regulations.

Extending Diwali greetings to the people of Ladakh, the Chief Secretary informed that Panchayat elections and elections to the Leh and Kargil Municipal Councils will be held on November 21, as announced by the respective electoral authorities.

Elections to all eight LAHDCs, covering 100 constituencies across Ladakh, will be held on December 4. Following the creation of eight districts from the erstwhile two districts, the number of LAHDC constituencies has increased from 26 each in Leh and Kargil to 100 for whole Ladakh. The delimitation exercise was undertaken in accordance with the prescribed rules, taking into account population and the existing Panchayat Halqas and Municipal Wards.

As per the election schedule of LAHDCs, November 17, 2026 is the last date for filing nominations, November 18 for scrutiny and November 20 for withdrawal of candidature.

The entire election process is scheduled to be completed before December 8.

Sharing the election figures, the Chief Secretary informed that out of 192 Panchayat Halqas, 55 Sarpanches have been elected unopposed, while elections will be held for the remaining 137 seats.

Similarly, 1186 Panch candidates have been elected unopposed out of 1428. In the Leh Municipal Council, elections will be held in all 21 wards, while four out of 17 wards in the Kargil Municipal Council have elected representatives unopposed.

He also highlighted that, for the first time, 36 out of the 100 LAHDC seats have been reserved for women, marking a significant step towards strengthening women's representation in grassroots democratic institutions.

On concerns raised regarding the Excise Policy, the Chief Secretary stated that the Administration had held detailed discussions with women representatives and other stakeholders, keeping local sensitivities in mind. He assured that the policy

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Correction and clarification

It is the policy of 'Reach Ladakh Bulletin' to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition, date, news item or the article.

You can contact at 9858394403 or email at editor@reachladakh.com.

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Owner, Publisher & Printer: Tundup Dorjey

Editor: Stanzin Dasal

Reporter: Sonam Angmo

Sales & Marketing: Tsering Morup
Contact: +91 9622491403

Designer: Stanzin Rabgyas (CAGO)

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Fortnightly News

Chief Secretary Ladakh calls for active public participation in upcoming elections, assures stakeholder consultations on key policy matters

...Continuity of page 1

would be reviewed through wider consultations after the conclusion of the elections, as no changes could be made during the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct.

Emphasising the importance of balancing local customs and sensitivities with economic considerations, he noted that tourism remains central to Ladakh's economy and supports the livelihoods of a large number of people. Referring to the teachings of Lord Buddha and the principle of the Middle Path, he stressed the need for a balanced approach while formulating the next year's Excise policy.

Regarding the Nautor Land Regulations, he stated that the draft had been prepared to address the long-pending issue of people holding Nautor land without proper legal titles.

Suggestions received from the public on Land regularisation rates and the proposed treatment of land belonging to universities; educational and religious institutions would be duly considered. He assured that the final regulations would be formulated only after detailed consultations with the newly elected LAHDCs.

The Chief Secretary also clarified that the newly elected LAHDCs would retain all powers vested in them under the existing law. In addition, they would exercise the powers envisaged for the District Panchayat under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, thereby further strengthening the role of the elected Councils.

Addressing concerns over the conduct of elections during winter, he assured that instructions had been issued to all Deputy Commissioners to ensure adequate facilities at polling stations, including heaters and separate queues for senior citizens. He observed that the timely constitution of the Councils was essential, as the newly elected LAHDCs would have January, February and March available for preparation of the budget for the next financial year.

Concluding his address, the Chief Secretary appealed to the people of Ladakh, particularly the youth, women, senior citizens, religious organisations and government employees, to participate enthusiastically in the forthcoming elections and exercise their democratic right to vote.

He noted that Panchayat elections had not been held for the past three years and described the constitution of eight new District Councils as an important milestone in strengthening democratic institutions in Ladakh.

Referring to the discussions held with the Apex Body and other stakeholders, he reiterated the commitment of the Government of India and the Ladakh Administration towards strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring their early constitution. He called upon all sections of society to make the forthcoming electoral exercise a success and contribute towards further deepening democracy in Ladakh.

Agniveers get two-year extension, fresh opportunity for regular defence service

25% to be recruited on merit after four years; remaining personnel can opt for an additional two-year tenure before consideration for regular enrolment



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The Union Cabinet has approved an additional two-year engagement period for Agniveers who are not selected for regular service after completing their initial four-year tenure, creating a further pathway for their possible absorption into the Defence Forces.

As envisaged under the Agnipath Scheme, 25% of Agniveers will be offered regular employment in the Defence Forces based on merit. The remaining 75% will have the option of undertaking an additional two-year engagement period, following recommendations from the Indian Defence Forces.

According to the Cabinet decision, after completing the additional two-year tenure, these Agniveers will also be offered the opportunity to enrol as regular soldiers, subject to their willingness and fulfillment of the prescribed selection criteria.

The decision follows a detailed assessment of the Agnipath Scheme after four years of implementation. The assessment, based on organisational requirements and operational efficiency, reportedly found Agniveers' performance positive in terms of skills, motivation, physical fitness and technological adaptability.

The introduction of the additional engagement period aims to align the aspirations of Agniveers with the operational requirements and organisational efficiency of the Defence Forces.

Among the key achievements highlighted in the assessment are the expansions of Agniveer recruitment across districts of the country, a more standardised and transparent recruitment process, and improvements in physical fitness, morale, motivation, competitive spirit and discipline.

The scheme has also contributed to skill development, technological adaptability and educational advancement among personnel, while opening up various branches of the Defence Forces for women.

Based on the assessment and feedback received, the Cabinet has decided to continue the Agnipath Scheme.

The additional two-year engagement period will also provide for higher remuneration, an enhanced Seva Nidhi package and seniority benefits.

The latest decision marks a significant development in the Agnipath recruitment framework, providing eligible Agniveers with an extended opportunity to serve in the Defence Forces before consideration for regular enrolment.

General and expenditure observers review MC election preparedness in Leh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The General Observer and the Expenditure Observer for the Municipal Committee (MC) Elections, 2026, Leh, held a meeting on November 12 with all the Returning Officers (ROs) of Municipal Committee, Leh, at the Conference Hall of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Old Raj Niwas, Karzoo, Leh.

The meeting was held to review election preparedness and other related arrangements for the forthcoming elections.

Tsering Paldan, JKAS, Director, School Education, the General Observer for the MC Elections, chaired the meeting in the presence of Stanzin Donsal, Director, Finance, the Expenditure Observer for the MC Elections, 2026.

Tsering Paldan briefed the Returning Officers on the strict enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct and on ensuring the smooth, free and fair conduct of the elections. He directed the ROs to visit their respective polling stations and to ensure that all requisite facilities, such as drinking water, shade and seating, toilets, ramps for persons with disabilities, proper lighting and signage, are available so that voters can cast their votes without any hassle.

He also briefed the Returning Officers (ROs) on their key responsibilities, ensuring proper polling arrangements, training and deployment of polling staff, enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, maintenance of law and order and timely submission of reports and maintenance of election records

Stanzin Donsal briefed the ROs on the inspection of the election expenditure accounts of the candidates, to be carried out in coordination with the Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) and the Expenditure Monitoring Teams on 16 and 19 November 2026. She asked the ROs to ensure that the candidates maintain their accounts properly and that all expenditure is recorded and reported within the prescribed limit.

Leh MC Polls: candidates briefed on election expenditure rules

Expenditure observer highlights ₹1 lakh spending ceiling, mandatory daily accounts and compliance requirements



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Director Finance and Expenditure Observer Stanzin Donsal, in the presence of Tsewang Chosgain, Nodal Officer for Expenditure Monitoring, chaired a meeting with all contesting candidates of the Municipal Council (MC) Election, Leh-2026, on November 10 at the Conference Hall of the Chief Electoral Officer, Ladakh, Old Raj Niwas, Karzoo.

Candidates who were unable to attend the meeting in person were represented by their authorised representatives. The meeting was convened to sensitise and brief the candidates on the rules, guidelines and procedures governing election expenditure monitoring. Stanzin Donsal explained the expenditure ceiling applicable to each candidate, the procedure for maintaining election expenditure registers and supporting documents, submission of expenditure statements and other statutory requirements to be followed during the election process.

She informed the candidates that the expenditure ceiling is fixed at Rs 1 lakh per candidate. She also emphasised that candidates must maintain expenditure registers in the prescribed format with day-to-day accounts. The Nodal Officer and other designated authorities may inspect these accounts, while bills and vouchers must be properly maintained and produced whenever required. Candidates are also required to submit their expenditure accounts to the Election Office after the declaration of results.

She urged all candidates to strictly comply with the prescribed norms and guidelines issued by the Chief Electoral Officer, UT Ladakh, and the Election Commission of India to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the election process. She also advised candidates to seek clarification from the Nodal Officer, Expenditure Monitoring, in case of any doubts regarding the maintenance and submission of expenditure accounts.

The Nodal Officer further briefed the candidates on the procedure for maintaining and furnishing election expenditure accounts.

Ladakh's saffron experiment blossoms in record 30 days



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Breaking new ground in Ladakh's high-altitude agricultural landscape, the experimental saffron cultivation project initiated by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on recently restored degraded land in Leh has begun to blossom, with the first bloom recorded in just 30 days, against the typical two-month timeline.

The Lieutenant Governor, on November 1, inspected the saffron field to witness the first bloom. He was informed that the cultivation site is currently averaging 20 to 25 blooming flowers daily, with a peak of 72 flowers recorded in a single morning. The promising growth has resulted in the successful collection of nearly 22 grams of pure saffron in just four days.

As part of the ambitious experiment, nearly 800 kg of premium Iranian saffron corms, numbering approximately 90,000, were planted across nearly 4,000 square metres of land that was previously barren and has recently been restored and rejuvenated under Project Him Sarovar, guided by LG Saxena. The plantation was undertaken on October 1, with the first bloom reported in less than 30 days.

The initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of diversifying traditional agricultural practices to promote financial sustainability and economic empowerment of farmers and youth.

Saffron cultivation in Ladakh builds on the Administration's successful experiments with high-value floriculture, particularly the large-scale cultivation of Lilium and Gladiolus in Leh, which has opened new employment and livelihood opportunities for farmers, Self-Help Groups and local entrepreneurs.

"This remarkable achievement is a powerful testament to the resilience of the local environment and highlights the immense, untapped potential of high-altitude farming in the Ladakh region. The breakthrough of this pilot project also lays a promising foundation for future commercial-scale saffron production. It will open highly lucrative new avenues for crop cultivation and agro-based entrepreneurship in Ladakh, actively paving the way for a stronger, thriving, and self-reliant local economy," LG Saxena said.

Saffron is a high-value crop with strong market demand and commands a premium price, offering farmers the potential to earn additional and remunerative income. Jammu and Kashmir is the primary saffron-producing region in India, accounting for approximately 90 per cent of the country's total production.

Its introduction in Ladakh is being undertaken as a pilot project to assess its suitability to the region's climatic conditions and explore its economic potential.

The Lieutenant Governor also appreciated the officials of the Agriculture Department, UT Ladakh, and the dedicated field staff for their significant contributions, expertise and commitment in ensuring the success of this pioneering initiative.

Chief Secretary chairs 16th UTLBC meeting, calls for strengthening banking outreach and credit flow in Ladakh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, on November 2, chaired the 16th Union Territory Level Bankers Committee (UTLBC) meeting to review the performance of banks in Ladakh for the quarter ending June 2026. The meeting reviewed credit disbursement, deposit and credit growth, the Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio, and the implementation of various government-sponsored schemes.

As per the key performance indicators, banks achieved 26% of the Annual Credit Target under Priority Sector Advances, disbursing ₹373 crore during the first quarter of 2026–27. Overall, banks achieved 29% of the annual target; disbursing ₹834 crore under priority and non-priority sector advances.

Total deposits registered a year-on-year growth of 12.32%, reaching ₹11,630.35 crore as of June 2026, while total credit grew by 10.48% to ₹5,319.22 crore. The overall Credit-Deposit ratio of UT Ladakh stood at 45.74% for the quarter ending June 2026.

The meeting commenced with a welcome address by Chander Mohan Bhat, Assistant General Manager, State Bank of India, Administrative Office, Jammu, who welcomed the Chairman and other dignitaries. A comprehensive presentation on the performance and achievements of banks was subsequently delivered by Tsering Wangmo, Assistant General Manager, Convenor Bank, UT Ladakh.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary directed all banks to organise at least one camp every month in each district, in coordination with the Department of Industries and Commerce, to enhance credit flow, improve the Credit-Deposit ratio and ensure wider coverage of eligible beneficiaries under various government-sponsored schemes.

Emphasising the need for improved access to institutional finance, the Chief Secretary directed that these camps focus on providing credit support in agriculture, MSME, renewable energy, education, housing and other priority sectors. The initiative aims to enable eligible beneficiaries to access financial assistance under one roof and in a timely manner.

He further directed that the outcomes of these camps be reviewed in subsequent meetings in consultation with the concerned line departments to assess progress, identify bottlenecks and ensure effective follow-up for enhancing credit flow in Ladakh.

General Manager, NABARD, Vikas Mittal, informed the meeting that the benchmark for the Credit-Deposit ratio is 60%. RBI Regional Director, Prabhakar Jha, highlighted that loans pertaining to borrowers in UT Ladakh, even if sanctioned by bank head offices located outside the Union Territory, should also be duly considered while calculating Ladakh's CD ratio.

The Chief Secretary also directed the State Bank of India and J&K Bank to strengthen banking infrastructure in the Vibrant Villages through the opening of bank branches, banking outlets and Business Correspondent (BC) facilities, along with the installation of ATMs, to improve access to banking services in remote and border areas.

Further, the Chief Secretary asked the Convenor Bank, UTLBC Ladakh, to prepare a common bank-wise loan application form covering various government-sponsored schemes to facilitate ease of application, simplify the loan application process, improve outreach and ensure timely disposal of cases.

Himanshu Gupta (IAS), Administrative Secretary, informed the meeting that trading and service-sector schemes, including Pashmina-related activities up to a certain limit, may also be included under the Mission Yuva scheme.

The meeting was attended by Tsewang Tharchin (IA&AS), Commissioner Secretary; Himanshu Gupta (IAS), Administrative Secretary; Dheeraj Bhaskar, Deputy Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, through video conferencing; Romil Singh Donk (IAS), Deputy Commissioner, Leh; Deputy Commissioner, Kargil; and officers from Sham, Changthang, Nubra, Zanskar and Drass through video conferencing.

Other participants included Prabhakar Jha, RBI Regional Director, through video conferencing; Vikas Mittal, General Manager, NABARD; Vibha Gupta, Deputy General Manager, RBI, through video conferencing; C. M. Bhat, Assistant General Manager, SBI, Administrative Office, Jammu; Tsewang Dorjay, Zonal Head, J&K Bank; Tsewang Dorjay, Assistant General Manager, NABARD; Directors and Joint Directors of concerned departments; and senior representatives of member banks and financial institutions.

DIET Leh concludes four-day training programme for 115 school health and wellness ambassadors



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Leh, successfully concluded a four-day capacity-building programme for 115 School Health and Wellness Ambassadors from different educational zones of Leh district, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening the implementation of the School Health and Wellness Programme (SHWP) in schools.

The concluding ceremony was graced by Dr. Rinchen Chosdol, Chief Medical Officer, Leh, as the Chief Guest. Also present were Sonam Dorje Namgyal, Principal, DIET Leh; Dr. Rinchen Angmo, District Immunization Officer and Nodal Officer, SHWP; Tsering Yangdol, HOD, DIET Leh; Deachen Dolkar, District Programme Officer, NRHM; and zonal counsellors and medical department officials from different zones.

The four-day training programme was organised by DIET Leh in collaboration with the Health Department under the Ayushman Bharat–School Health and Wellness Programme, a joint initiative of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

The programme aims to promote holistic health, physical and emotional well-being, healthy lifestyles and positive behavioural practices among school-going children through structured and activity-based health education.

During the training, the 115 participating School Health and Wellness Ambassadors explored the programme's framework, implementation guidelines and all 11 thematic modules prescribed under the national curriculum. The sessions highlighted the importance of integrating health education into everyday school practices and empowering teachers to act as facilitators of health awareness and well-being.

The thematic sessions covered a range of important areas, including growing up healthy, emotional well-being and mental health, interpersonal relationships, prevention and management of substance misuse, safety and security against violence and injuries, reproductive health and HIV prevention, gender equality, nutrition, health and sanitation, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and the safe use of the internet, gadgets and social media.

The sessions were facilitated by a multidisciplinary team of experts from the Health Department and allied institutions. The resource persons included Dr. Rinchen Angmo, District Immunization Officer and Nodal Officer, SHWP; Dr. Zahid, Paediatrician, SNM Hospital, Leh; Dr. Sajad, Clinical Psychologist, Tele-MANAS; Dr. Tashi Tundup, Consultant Psychiatrist, SNM Hospital, Leh; Dr. Shaheeena Parveen, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, Tele-MANAS; Dr. Kunzes Angmo, Gynaecologist, PHC Chuchot; Dr. Disket Dolkar, Gynaecologist; Amir, Social Protection Officer, IEC, District Child Protection Unit; Ninchet, Counsellor, Nubra; Dechen Dolkar, Clinical Psychologist, Tele-MANAS; Rigzin Yangdol, State Consultant, Social Department; and Tsering Angmo, Lecturer, DIET Leh.

The fourth day of the training was conducted with the support of the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), with a particular focus on tobacco prevention, awareness and the implementation of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA). The session sensitised participants to the harmful consequences of tobacco consumption, the importance of tobacco-free educational institutions and the role of schools in creating awareness and ensuring compliance with tobacco-control provisions. The session was facilitated by Dr. Jamyang, NTCP Consultant, and Ravinder Kumar, Nodal Officer, National Tobacco Control Programme, Himachal Pradesh.

Addressing the gathering, Sonam Dorje Namgyal, Principal, DIET Leh, highlighted the importance of health and wellness education as an integral component of holistic learning. He emphasised that schools must go beyond academic instruction and create environments where children's physical, emotional, social and psychological well-being receive equal attention. He also encouraged the participating ambassadors to translate the knowledge gained during the training into meaningful practices in their respective schools.

Chief Medical Officer, Leh, Dr. Rinchen Chosdol, highlighted the importance of health promotion and preventive healthcare in shaping a healthier generation. She underscored the need for close coordination between the Education and Health Departments and encouraged teachers to become active advocates of healthy behaviours, early awareness and well-being among children.

Dr. Rinchen Angmo, District Immunization Officer and Nodal Officer, SHWP, highlighted the relevance of the programme's 11 thematic modules and the pivotal role of trained ambassadors in ensuring their effective implementation at the school level. She stressed that consistent engagement, awareness and collaboration are essential to creating a lasting culture of health and wellness in educational institutions.

The four-day programme concluded with the distribution of certificates to the participating School Health and Wellness Ambassadors in recognition of their participation and commitment to promoting health education and well-being in their respective schools.

Tsering Yangdol, HOD, DIET Leh, delivered the formal vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to the Chief Guest, Principal DIET Leh, resource persons from the Health Department and allied institutions, and all participating teachers for their valuable contributions and active engagement. She also highlighted the importance of the programme and congratulated the participants on their enthusiasm, dedication and successful completion of the training.

The training marks an important step towards strengthening the school-level implementation of the School Health and Wellness Programme in Leh district. With trained ambassadors returning to their respective schools, the initiative aims to translate health awareness into everyday practice and nurture healthier, happier, emotionally resilient and more informed children.

A healthy child is the foundation of a healthy school, a resilient community and a stronger future.

Chief Secretary reviews Youth and Sports, Transport and Urban Development Sectors in Ladakh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra chaired a series of departmental review meetings on November 2 to assess the functioning, ongoing projects, achievements and key challenges of the Departments of Youth Services and Sports, Transport, and Housing and Urban Development.

During the review of the Department of Youth Services and Sports, Secretary, Youth Services and Sports, Gopi Krishnan, made a detailed presentation covering the departmental organisational structure, key performance indicators, completed and ongoing projects, student participation in school-level tournaments, Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE), Leh, national-level sports representation and participation in the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue. The presentation also highlighted the status of infrastructure projects, major challenges and priority areas of the department.

The Chief Secretary reviewed the availability and quality of sports infrastructure, including sports hostels, training facilities, multipurpose indoor halls, ice hockey facilities in Leh and Kargil, archery infrastructure and other ongoing projects. He emphasised the need to identify priority sports and strengthen facilities in disciplines such as ice hockey, archery, boxing, athletics, taekwondo and shooting, with a focus on developing quality infrastructure, professional coaching and structured training opportunities.

Stressing the importance of strengthening the sports ecosystem at the grassroots level, the Chief Secretary called for greater participation of students through school-based sports activities, particularly in rural and underserved areas. He emphasised the need to identify sporting talent at an early age, map existing facilities and address infrastructure gaps in schools and localities. He also stressed the importance of strengthening coordination with recognised sports associations and the Sports Council, reviewing their functioning and affiliation status, and establishing a structured mechanism to support athletes through equipment, coaching, training facilities and exposure to competitions outside Ladakh.

The Chief Secretary further stressed the need to develop a focused approach towards preparing athletes for national-level championships and major sporting events, including the Khelo India Winter Games. He called for identifying promising athletes, providing them with specialised training and coaching support, and ensuring that infrastructure development is aligned with the sporting disciplines in which Ladakh has potential for national-level representation.

Reviewing the Transport Department, Secretary, Transport, Gopi Krishnan, presented an overview of the department's functioning, covering vehicle registration, new registrations of transport and non-transport vehicles, driving licences, permits, fitness certification, revenue collection, challan receipts, fleet modernisation, e-auction of fancy registration numbers and the implementation of the Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy. The presentation also covered major projects under the Special Development Package (SDP), vehicle requirements of LAHDCs and government departments, and issues relating to staff shortages in the Regional Transport Office (RTO) and Assistant Transport Office (ATO), along with the possibility of outsourcing certain services to improve public convenience.

The Chief Secretary reviewed vehicle registration trends, including fuel-wise registration patterns and the ratio of transport and non-transport vehicles. He emphasised the need to facilitate the expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure and encourage greater participation of automobile dealerships in Ladakh to support EV adoption. He also reviewed the status of automated vehicle testing facilities, particularly the progress of the facility in Kargil, and called for a clear assessment of its operational status, testing capacity and performance.

Other important issues discussed included the integration of Aadhaar with smart-card driving licences, vehicle fitness certification procedures, interstate transport arrangements and route regulation. The Chief Secretary also reviewed matters relating to vehicle scrapping, dealer authorisations and the availability of essential vehicle spare parts, stressing the need to streamline transport-related services and address operational gaps affecting citizens.

During the review of the Housing and Urban Development Department (HUDD), Secretary, HUDD, presented the progress of key urban development initiatives, including solid waste management, proposed decentralised Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in Leh, the 10-tonne-per-day MRF facility at Bomgarh, legacy waste remediation and Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants.

The presentation also covered existing and proposed parking infrastructure in Leh, projects under AMRUT 2.0, rejuvenation of water bodies, development of parks, progress under PM SVANidhi and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban (PMAY-U), along with the financial overview for FY 2026–27, flagship projects in Leh and Kargil, and key departmental challenges.

The Chief Secretary reviewed the progress of solid waste management initiatives and stressed the need to ensure quality in the execution of works, effective monitoring of contractors and timely completion of ongoing projects. He also emphasised addressing urban infrastructure requirements, particularly those relating to traffic management, parking, water supply, sewerage and other essential civic amenities. He called for identifying priority interventions that could be taken up in a time-bound manner and directed that issues requiring coordination between Leh and Kargil be examined through appropriate joint consultations to ensure coordinated implementation and improved urban services.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary of the concerned departments, OSD Special Projects, Under Secretaries of the respective departments and other senior concerned officers.

Tobacco-Free Youth Campaign 4.0 launched in Leh, 60-day awareness drive announced



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: With a focus on protecting young people from tobacco addiction, the Health Department, Leh, launched the Tobacco-Free Youth Campaign 4.0 at Main Market, near Staksang Raspa Statue, on November 2. The programme began with an awareness rally aimed at encouraging people, particularly the youth, to understand the harmful effects of tobacco consumption and take steps towards building a tobacco-free society.

Organised under the theme "Healthy Youth, Tobacco-Free Ladakh," the campaign brought together officials from various departments, healthcare professionals, police personnel, students and other participants to spread awareness about tobacco use and its impact on health.

In her welcome address, Chief Medical Officer, Leh, Dr. Rinchen Chosdol, welcomed the dignitaries, officials, healthcare professionals, media representatives and students. She thanked the Chief Guest and the Police Department for their support, saying that protecting young people from tobacco addiction requires collective efforts from all sections of society. She also encouraged students to become ambassadors of the campaign and spread awareness among their peers. She appreciated the Ladakh Police Band for adding energy to the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Stanzin Jamyang, District Consultant, National Tobacco Control Programme, said that efforts to control tobacco consumption should continue beyond the launch event. He stressed that government departments, social organisations and the public must work together to discourage tobacco use and prevent addiction.

Sharing the progress of the tobacco-free village initiative, he informed that 156 villages have been identified as tobacco-free, while 42 villages are yet to achieve the status. He also highlighted the possible link between tobacco consumption and substance abuse and called for greater awareness and responsibility at the individual and community levels.

He further informed that a 60-day awareness drive will be conducted as part of the campaign to encourage public participation and bring sustained behavioural changes.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Dr. Tashi Thinless highlighted the serious health consequences of tobacco consumption, particularly its association with different types of cancer and other life-threatening diseases. He stressed the importance of preventive measures and awareness, especially among young people.

The issue of substance abuse was also discussed during the programme. Manzoor Ahmad, SHO Leh spoke about the growing challenge of drug abuse in Leh and the measures being taken by the Police Department to control the supply of narcotic substances. He informed that an Anti-Narcotics Task Force has been established to strengthen enforcement efforts and take action against drug-related activities.

Consultant Psychiatrist Tashi Tundup spoke about the psychological factors that contribute to addiction and its effects on the mental and physical well-being of individuals. He highlighted the importance of early intervention, awareness and proper support, particularly for young people.

Dr. Lotus Gyalson, Consultant Physician and DM Cardiologist at SNM Hospital, Leh, also spoke about the health complications associated with tobacco consumption. He explained its harmful effects on different organs of the human body and stressed the need for prevention and early awareness.

Students also played an active role in the programme. A street play (Nukkad Natak) presented by students of Boys Higher Secondary School, Leh, highlighted the harmful effects of tobacco and conveyed a message against its use. The Ladakh Police Band also performed during the event.

The programme further included a No Tobacco Pledge, in which participants reaffirmed their commitment to promoting a tobacco-free environment. Certificates of participation and mementoes were also distributed in recognition of the contributions of participating institutions and individuals.

Students from the Ancillary Medical Training School and Boys Higher Secondary School, Leh, participated in the event, highlighting the role of young people in spreading awareness and encouraging others to stay away from tobacco.

With the 60-day awareness drive planned as part of the campaign, the Health Department aims to take the message beyond the launch programme and encourage continued public participation in making Ladakh a healthier and tobacco-free region.

Chief Secretary calls for targeted development interventions in Tribal areas under DAJGUA



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra on November 5 chaired a meeting to discuss and consider projects proposed under the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA) of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, for implementation in the Union Territory.

The meeting reviewed the framework and implementation guidelines of the Abhiyan, including its project portfolio, coverage, mission period, key focus areas and convergence requirements. A detailed presentation was made on the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY) under the DAJGUA framework, works approved during the financial year 2025–26 and their progress. The departments also presented proposals for the coming period, including the construction of girls' hostels and Tribal Multipurpose Community Halls (TMCHs), along with the improvement of infrastructure at Bal Ashrams.

The Chief Secretary examined the proposed projects and sought clarity on the criteria for selecting locations and identifying interventions. He stressed that every proposal must be supported by proper justification, reflect the needs of tribal communities and address gaps in essential infrastructure. He also directed the concerned departments to ensure that proposals adequately incorporate essential facilities such as furniture, heating arrangements, toilets and other operational requirements, wherever applicable, to make the infrastructure functional and suitable for local climatic conditions.

Emphasising equitable development across tribal areas of Ladakh, the Chief Secretary called for focused attention on strengthening healthcare facilities, including the upgradation of Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres and district hospitals. He also underscored the importance of improving hostel infrastructure, sanitation, heating arrangements and other basic amenities to ensure better living conditions and access to essential services for tribal communities.

The Chief Secretary stressed the need to address connectivity gaps in remote and far-flung tribal villages to improve access to essential services and development opportunities. He directed the concerned departments to hold a separate meeting with the Planning Department to examine connectivity-related proposals, assess their feasibility and ensure their alignment with DAJGUA guidelines. He further emphasised that such interventions should be prioritised on the basis of local requirements and supported by proper planning and justification.

The meeting also discussed the scope for promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities for tribal communities through need-based interventions in sectors such as fisheries, responsible tourism and homestays. The Chief Secretary called upon the concerned departments to explore the potential of these sectors and formulate suitable proposals to strengthen local livelihoods, generate employment and improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities.

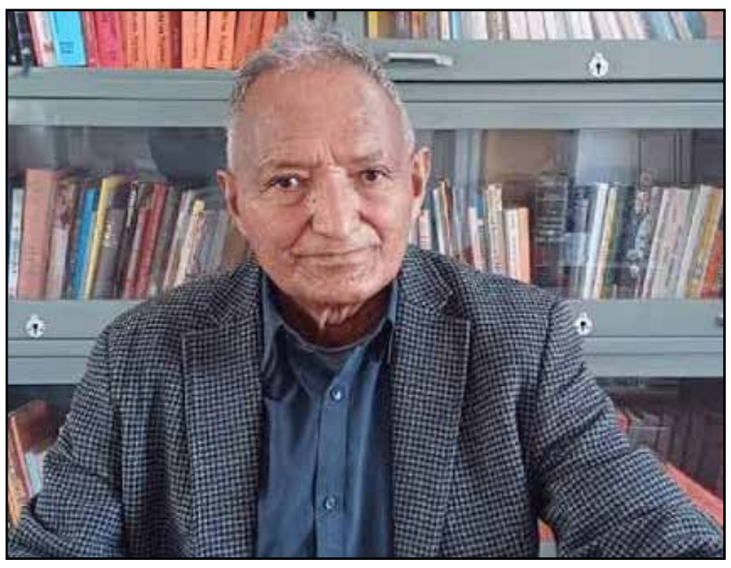
The Chief Secretary directed the departments to thoroughly examine the DAJGUA guidelines and identify eligible sectors and interventions in accordance with the prescribed framework and objectives of the Abhiyan. He emphasised that all proposals should be need-based, properly planned and aligned with the scheme's guidelines, with priority given to addressing infrastructure gaps, strengthening basic services and promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities across tribal areas of the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner/Secretary, Health, Lalinthakhuma Franklin; Secretary, Social and Tribal Welfare, Nidhi Malik; Secretary, School Education, Bhanu Prabha; Director, School Education, Tsering Paldan; CPO Leh, Tsewang Gyalson; and other concerned officers and departmental representatives.

In Focus:

Chhang tradition to alcohol-free Ladakh: A changing social debate

By Nawang Tsering Shakspo



Ladakh is known as the land of Lamas. As such, Buddhist principles guide the behaviour and the lifestyle of the people here. According to Lord Buddha's teaching, alcohol is the root-cause of all human misdeeds or misconduct. However, in the past, drinking of locally-made alcohol, called Chhang, was widespread in Ladakh. In fact, in almost every household, women, particularly elderly ladies, would prepare Chhang for the consumption of every family member and guests as well. Similarly, in Leh town, there is a street called Nowshahar that was known more as Chhang Gali or street, where the women of the nearby villages used to bring their best quality of Chhang for sale, and interested people would openly consume the same without any hitch as there did not exist any prohibition on sale or drinking of Chhang. And the same was not considered a nuisance or a health hazard.

It is a well-known fact that all the way from the commencement of people's settlement in the region, they were peasants and grew wheat and barley grains in abundance as suitable crops to grow in the harsh climatic conditions of the region; and, as of today, to obtain good yield, farmers put a lot of hard work. It was in such conditions that Chhang was a natural requirement, something to stimulant their bodies. Hence, Chhang, the light alcoholic drink, emerged in the region as the main thirst-quencher to give a kind of 'refreshment' to the overworked bodies and minds of the local people.

Similarly, eating of meat or mutton too was widespread in the region from the early times, though, according to the Buddha's teaching, eating meat is a sin and people must abstain from eating the same. But due to the harsh climatic conditions of the region, Chhang and mutton along with Snanphe or Tsampa (made of barley grains, a kind of Sattu) remained a healthy and nutritious food since times immemorial.

Here, it is worth mentioning that in Ladakh in the absence of Chhang, no social or religious festivities and celebrations are held. Particularly in organising marriages, locally called Bagston, Chhang is requited as a must item, mainly due to the fact that marriages are celebrated, traditionally, with the onset of winter months after harvest season, and to do so people put in a lot of effort, and the celebrations go on for several days. To carry the formalities as well and as people stay engaged to organise the marriage-related ceremonies, alcoholic drinks like Chhang is necessarily required.



In addition, several Buddhist festivals are organised in which the local community take part as volunteers. Particularly at the community level, a religious chanting is organised, addressed as Tsishu, on the 10th day of Buddhist calendar, a ceremony of prayer to Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of the Mahayana form of Buddhism, both in Tibet and Ladakh. While organising the ceremony, the availability of Chhang remains of utmost importance. In the ceremony, males without any age bar take part and the devotees liberally drink Chhang. Similarly, Chhang is also required during the birth and death ceremonies, as the procedure of organising these ceremonies is lengthy and time-consuming, going for days together. So, this way of the tradition of consumption of Chhang remains a part and parcel of every Buddhist socio-cultural celebration in the region.

This is the story of the past; and even in the present times, Buddhist have some kind of belief that consumption of Chhang or any other alcoholic drink is not a bad habit, rather it is a part and parcel of tradition and culture of the region. Now, in the changed situation, particularly from the Independence of the country in the year 1947, and positioning of army personnel in the region in a big number, and eventually Ladakh's connection with the State capital, Srinagar, by air in the year 1949, and subsequently the region's road-linkage with Srinagar, in 1963, in addition to Chhang, the availability of hard drinks such as Rum, Whiskey etc. became a common phenomenon. Next, the region was thrown open to tourism in 1974, and that made the availability of hard drinks much easier. Later, with the passage of time, wine shops and bars were opened in Leh market and several villages.

In addition, now the youth of Ladakh coming into contact with domestic as well as foreign tourists, have started taking drugs; and in this connection the Ladakh police arrested several drug traffickers, among them some were Ladakhis. Not only that, this menace has also hit the school children, particularly residing in boardings. Hence, to "counter the menace of drugs", the local administration recently came out with a plan to issue licenses and open up bar shops in the region, over which the Ladakhi civil society, particularly women belonging to all religions, showed their dismay and anguish, and they started a movement in the form of dharna commencing from October 22, 2026. Mainly led by the Women Alliance of Ladakh, women of Ladakh staged Dharna (peaceful agitation) against the liquor policy of the administration. On this issue, the agitators said that opening of Bars was not the way to counter the menace of consumption of drugs. Hence, the women and the local religious associations have demanded the cancellation of the liquor licences. They demanded that Ladakh be declared an alcohol-free region like Gujarat and some other places in the country.

(The writer is the Founder Director of Centre for Research on Ladakh. You can send your views and comment at sntsering52@gmail.com)

The World of Juniors

In recognition of the increasing impact television has on decision-making by bringing world attention to conflicts and threats to peace and security and its potential role in sharpening the focus on other major issues, including economic and social issues, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 November as World Television Day (through resolution 51/205 of 17 December 1996).

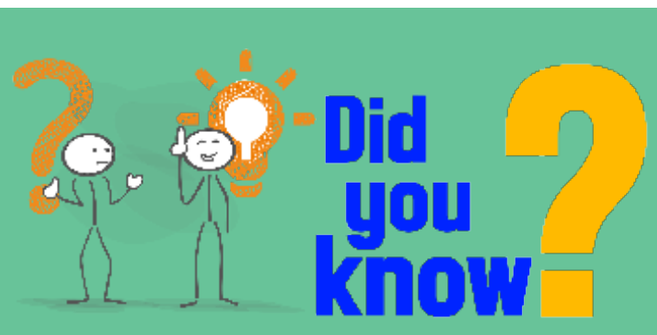
World Television Day is not so much a celebration of the tool, but rather the philosophy which it represents. Television represents a symbol for communication and globalization in the contemporary world.

On 21 and 22 November 1996 the United Nations held the first World Television Forum, where leading media figures met under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss the growing significance of television in today's changing world and to consider how they might enhance their mutual cooperation. That is why the General Assembly decided to proclaim 21 November as World Television Day.



This was done in recognition of the increasing impact television has on the process of decision-making. Television was thus acknowledged as a major tool in informing, channelling and affecting public opinion. Its impact and presence and its influence on world politics could not be denied.

Courstey: United Nation



Did you know it's illegal to feed pigeons on the sidewalks and streets of San Francisco?
Sure, a sprinkle of breadcrumbs to feed hungry birds may seem harmless, but in the popular Californian city, you could get into trouble. San Francisco's Public Works Department explains this law is in place because there "are dozens of reasons why" you shouldn't feed your new pigeon friends, "but mainly: feeding pigeons harm our neighborhoods and also harms the birds."

Did you know an astronaut was allergic to the Moon?
Seems like someone had a tre-moon-dous allergy problem! During the Apollo 17 mission, astronaut Harrison Schmitt found out that he had a severe reaction to Moon dust.

Did you know the official bird of Redondo Beach, California, is the Goodyear Blimp?
In 1983, the coastal city made the Goodyear Blimp its official city bird in anticipation of the 1984 summer Olympics. They even presented a plaque to a team from Goodyear Airship Operations to help celebrate the decision!

Did you know that three U.S. Presidents have won Grammys?
Former President Jimmy Carter won three Grammy Awards in the Best Spoken Word Album category. The first one was for Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis in 2007. Next, came A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety in 2016. Finally, Faith: A Journey for All in 2019.

2004, Bill Clinton won Best Spoken Word Album for My Life. Just a year prior, in 2003, he won the Best Spoken Word Album for Children with Prokofiev: Peter And The Wolf/Beintus: Wolf Tracks.

Finally, Barack Obama has won a couple of golden megaphones of his own. He won Best Spoken Word Album in 2006 for the narration of his book, Dreams From My Father audiobook. In 2008, he took home the Grammy for Best Spoken Word Album for the audiobook version of The Audacity of Hope.

Did you know Neil Armstrong once threatened to sue his barber for selling his hair?
In 2005, Neil Armstrong once threatened legal action against his former barber who had earned $3,000 for selling a lock of the astronaut's hair. The barber took no heed of the threat and went on to make over $38,000 in 2016 by selling both the hair and the barber's comb and scissors.

SoulSpeak

Dr. P.P. Wangchuk

Lady Luck may be round the corner!



I feel good to repeat the saying again and again: Luck is just another name for hard work. True, that is like saying that success is 99% perspiration and 1% luck. Given that, one can also repeat the proverbial saying that luck favours the brave.

It is not that you work hard and you don't get anything in return. It is quite likely that at times you feel that you have been 'unlucky'. It is also possible that you were about to be 'rewarded' when you gave up! Alas, only if you had the patience to wait and work hard a little more! That is why our elders tell us that there is no short-cut to success, and that you have to keep on trying until 'lady luck' embraces you!

Herein fits the famous quote of the great South African golfer, Gary Player: "The harder I practise, the luckier I get." What he wanted to say was that there is no substitute for hard work, and that the sooner one realises that, the better it is.

In fact, I am very fond of the saying that hard work is in itself a great reward. The kind of feeling of joy, satisfaction and triumph one gets after a day's fulfilling work gives one peace of mind, good health and sound sleep. One may or may not consciously acknowledge it, but the fact that one could 'smile' at the end of the day is a definite sign of one's one more step forward towards one's goal.

Actually, success is a gradual fruition of one's earnest and consistent effort towards one's goal. When you succeed, you say that you were 'lucky', and when you don't succeed, then you tend to say that luck did not favour you enough.

Even then if you keep on trying despite setbacks on the way, Lady Luck, one day, will come and give her blessings to you. She favours nobody but those who never give up. That is my understanding and promise to my readers! Best of Lady Luck!

Courtesy: WongWorld

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

Fortnightly News

In Conversation with
Padma Angmo, Author

Interviewed by Sonam Angmo

Q. Please introduce yourself and tell us about your journey. What inspired your first book, Ruler of the Sky?

Jullay, and thank you for inviting me. I completed English Honours at the University of Delhi and studied Journalism at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC). I worked with Times Now as a newsreader for Times News Radio and as a copy editor, then returned to Ladakh to work as a reporter with the Information Department and as a consultant at Ernst & Young on the Sustainable Tourism Development Policy.

When I first thought of writing a book, I lacked the courage. During school visits and workshops, I often see the same lack of self-belief in children that I experienced. I wondered: Who am I to become a writer? Writers often seemed to come from outside Ladakh, but becoming a writer was a precious dream I could not give up. As a child, I wanted to serve my community and be a voice for the voiceless, which led me to journalism. At Times Now, I found that news was often driven by TRP ratings and fear. I was also encouraged to adopt an American, British or mainland Indian accent. Our voice is connected to our roots, and I did not want to change mine to fit others'expectations. I first hoped to address the climate crisis through journalism, but discovered poetry as another medium. Journalism seemed to ask me to change, while poetry let me embrace my identity. Leaving mainstream media was difficult, but I chose to resign and dedicate myself to Ruler of the Sky.

I feared that only my family might read the book, but my dream was bigger than my fears. I was also witnessing environmental and social changes in Ladakh: changes in the landscape, people and communities. Through Ruler of the Sky, I wanted to explore ecological grief and how environmental change affects our emotions, relationships and ways of life.

The poem The Truth in Ruler of the Sky captures my choice of identity over conformity. The chapter The Hero explores false leaders and hero worship. Blindly following others makes us stop questioning and lose our voice. I want readers to reclaim their power and individuality.
The book also celebrates poetry. Poems such as The Tales of Four Seasons are accessible to all ages. I read them to children because poetry should be something everyone can enjoy. For me, it is about finding our voice and expressing what we feel.

Q. Your books, Ruler of the Sky and Katabita, are very different. What made you write two kinds of books?

My journalism background strengthened my observation skills. While working with the Department of Information and Public Relations, I accompanied Commissioner Secretary Padma Angmo to cover Social Welfare Department activities. During a visit to Munsel School, a school for children with disabilities, I noticed the children's drawings. Their creativity made me realise how easily we focus on one aspect of a child's identity and overlook other forms of expression. I promised myself I would return for a creative writing and art workshop.

Around the same time, I covered children in street situations and visited the old-age home in Shey. I met elderly people facing abandonment and property disputes—difficulties I had not imagined were so prevalent in Leh. Their wisdom reminded me of the power I saw in the children's artwork. I wanted to bring these experiences together.

In November 2024, I organised Super Power with two artists. They taught art while I led creative writing. We created a safe space by sharing our own superpowers first. The children made drawings and scribbles; I saw meaning in them —magic in the mess and beauty in chaos. Many drew JCBs, excavators and mountains, showing how perceptive children are.

These experiences became Katabita. Though different, both books share the same heart. Katabita is rooted in Ladakh and explores how to change without forgetting what matters. It grew from the people I met, what I observed and my promise to Munsel School

Q. What challenges does a writer face in Ladakh, and what potential do you see for writers and literature to grow in the region?

People discouraged me, asking who would read books in Ladakh and advising me to seek a government job. I wrote because I loved it. After publication, some of them congratulated me, and I noticed a change in how they viewed books.

Being called the first woman poet is not simply a title to me; the person who climbs a mountain first also faces challenges. Mindsets must change. My book costs Rs 500, which some consider expensive, but publishing is costly and its value goes beyond its price. I chose writing over a more financially stable career because I wanted to contribute to Ladakh's literary landscape and cultural representation. Children need to see their culture and experiences in books; otherwise, they may not imagine becoming writers. We may spend Rs 1,000 on toys or at a café, yet question spending Rs 500 on a book. A book can shape a child's thinking and teach beyond entertainment.

I wanted to introduce children to emotional intelligence. A book alone cannot solve substance abuse, but helping children understand their emotions early may address deeper problems. Not ev-

...continues on page 6



MESSAGE TO THE READERS

"Believe in your dreams, embrace your roots and never be afraid to find your own voice. Read, write, observe and express yourself. Your stories matter, and your experiences are worth sharing. Stay curious, creative and true to yourself."

Fortnight Highlights



ThukRes Youth Fest 2026, organised in collaboration with Radio rGazom 90.8 FM and the Indian Army at Government Degree College Kargil, provided a vibrant platform for young people to showcase their talent, creativity and cultural diversity.



An Indian Air Force IL-76MD has scripted history with a successful landing at Nyoma, marking the highest-altitude landing ever achieved by the aircraft anywhere in the world. A remarkable demonstration of the aircraft's enduring capability, backed by the exceptional skill, precision, and professionalism of its crew.



As part of Tobacco Campaign 4.0, an awareness training session for PRIs and shopkeepers was organised at DH Hall, Nubra. The session aimed to strengthen community awareness and promote a tobacco-free environment through active public participation and compliance with tobacco control regulations.



Deputy Commissioner, Nubra, Mukul Beniwal, IAS, convened a meeting with the Master Trainers to review the preparedness and arrangements for the upcoming Panchayat Elections 2026.



District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Leh, organized a Mega Legal Awareness Drive at Kharu on 11 November 2026 to educate the general public about their legal rights, duties and the availability of free legal services. The programme witnessed the participation of approximately 120.



Newly functional CFCs across Ladakh are empowering artisans through hands-on training in spinning, weaving and embroidery, while promoting traditional craftsmanship through handloom awareness and technical guidance.



The 60 day Tobacco Free Youth Campaign 4.0 was formally launched from the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Nubra District. The 60 day campaign aims to intensify awareness and preventive efforts against tobacco consumption, particularly among youth and adolescents.



Thukjay Palkit, a student of PM Shri High School, Chumathang, represented the Union Territory of Ladakh at the National Science Seminar 2026 held in New Delhi on October 30, 2026.9.

In Conversation with Padma Angmo, Author

...Continuity of page 5

ery child has someone supportive to share feelings with. English is sometimes treated only as a subject to pass or a means of communication. Literature involves engaging with ideas and human experiences, understanding contexts, analysing themes and thinking critically. It helps us explore society, relationships, politics, emotions and identity.

Q. What advice would you give young people who want to become writers but do not know where to start?

My parents brought me books because I was an introvert. They gave me literary classics, and even when I could not understand them, I looked through and scribbled in them. Repeated exposure develops interest. Not everyone gets this opportunity early, but it is never too late to begin reading. Read and write, but also observe. Think like a journalist: research, investigate, interview and understand different perspectives. Live fully, observe your experiences and develop your own opinions. Write even if you do not intend to publish; share your work when ready.

Originality matters. Develop your own voice rather than copying others. A boy at a workshop asked, "Who will read a Ladakhi's book?" I told him people would read it because he is Ladakhi. Our roots and experiences make our stories worth reading.

Ruler of the Sky took five years, and my second book took two. Meaningful writing takes time. Shortcuts may be faster but not satisfying. Challenge yourself, remain original and put your heart into your work.

Q. Is there any topic or story you still wish to write about?

After writing Ruler of the Sky, the idea for Katabita came naturally, like taking one step and discovering the next. I realised I had more ideas. Both books are a gift to the community. A portion of Katabita's proceeds will support children with disabilities in Ladakh. I wanted the book to have a purpose beyond reading. Its activities make reading interactive and revive the storytelling tradition of our grandparents, who told stories on rooftops. Families and teachers can do these activities with children.

I want to revive folklore and storytelling. I am working on books on folklore, short stories and poetry, and have many ideas ahead. If you do something with integrity, you will find your way.

Q. Folklore and storytelling traditions are declining, and reading habits are changing, especially among young people. With social media and phones taking up so much time, what would you say to people who want to read but struggle to step away from social media?

We need to address our social media use. Even I struggle sometimes. Parents should introduce children to good books early. I am not saying they should stop buying toys or treats; we need balance. Give children more books and perhaps fewer toys to help nurture their future.

Children are being given mobile phones at a very young age, which can affect the development of their cognitive abilities. Reading is one way to address social media addiction. I encourage parents to give children books instead of always buying plastic toys and junk food. A book is gold, and healthy food for the brain.

It is never too late to read. If you cannot concentrate, try deleting social media applications and reinstalling them only when needed. Excessive phone use can affect concentration and memory. Instead of saying we are addicted, take action and read.

A children's book is not only for children; it can help anyone reconnect with the inner child. In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche describes three stages of transformation: the camel, which carries responsibilities; the lion, which questions and challenges imposed values; and the child, which represents innocence, creativity and freedom to create one's own values. It is a journey from obedience, to rebellion, to creation.

You mentioned that my book looks like a children's book, but I feel that I am reconnecting with the fearless and powerful version of myself that I was as a child. I feel that my creativity and everything within me are becoming stronger again. I am not saying that we should become children; I am saying that we should bring out the child within us—the sense of wonder, courage and freedom that we sometimes lose as we grow older.

There is nothing to be embarrassed about when reading children's books. It is not about being childish, but childlike. Books open up different worlds and ideas beyond our daily routine. We often feel time is passing faster, but our lives have become so occupied with social media that we hardly notice the days going by. We must control social media rather than allowing it to control us.

For adults who want to write, my advice is to work with honesty and dedication. Observe the world and live fully; experiences become the foundation of writing.

I thank the Munsel School staff, especially principal Kunzang Palkit, Madam Kunzes and CEO Tsewang Yangzes. Their support and dedication inspired me. Greater government support, better facilities and resources would help them do more. Children with disabilities deserve opportunities. This book shows that with time, trust and encouragement, their gifts can shine. I am proud these children are official illustrators.

The student illustrators and their contributions:

Tsewang Namgyal: Yellow JCB, brown car, cat and dog.
Samchok Gyatso: Pink JCB, pink car and helicopter.
Diskit Angmo: Fruits and vegetables.
Stanzin Chosgyal: Timid green caterpillar, mountain with sunrise, and a pink house with a red roof.
Rigzen Nurbo: Pink house.
Chemat Rabjor: Mountain and sunrise, fruits and vegetables.
Manish Kumar: Fruits and vegetables.
Jigmet Namgyal: Blue hand and apple.
Konchok Rinchen: Red forest, red trees and butterfly.
Kunga Samphel: Red forest with a stream.
Thinley Norbo: Doodle.
Stanzin Tundup: Doodle.
Stanzin Tharlam: Tree and orange.
Kurga Moslam: Doodle.
Stanzin Lundup: Red hands.

I thank all these children for their beautiful contributions. I hope they continue creating, exploring their talents and believing in themselves. They have made this book even more special for me.

District Election Officer Kargil conducts randomisation of EVMs for upcoming MC elections



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: District Election Officer (DEO)/Deputy Commissioner Kargil, Rakesh Kumar on November 10 conducted the randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for the upcoming Municipal Elections in Kargil. Representatives of various political parties were present during the process, ensuring transparency and participation of political stakeholders in the election-related exercise.

The randomisation process was carried out through the Electronic Voting Machines Randomization System (EVRMS) to ensure transparency, fairness and impartiality in the allocation of Ballot Units (BUs) and Control Units (CUs) for the upcoming elections.

The exercise forms an important part of the election preparedness process and aims to ensure the transparent and systematic deployment of EVMs across the polling stations of the district.

The randomisation process was conducted in accordance with the prescribed election procedures and guidelines issued by the CEO Ladakh Office, ensuring fairness and transparency in the electoral process.

GDC Zanskar organises two-day workshop on women's leadership and self-confidence among girls



ZANSKAR: Government Degree College (GDC) Zanskar organised a two-day workshop on "Women's Leadership and Self-Confidence Among Girls" under the PM-USHA Scheme on November 4 and 5. The workshop was held under the patronage of Principal Dr. Amjad Ali Abassi with the objective of fostering leadership qualities, self-confidence, and personal development among girl students.

The programme commenced with a keynote address by Dr. Mohd. Hussain, PM-USHA Convener, who highlighted the importance of leadership and self-confidence in empowering young women to become active and responsible contributors to society.

Principal Dr. Amjad Ali Abassi addressed the gathering and shared valuable insights into the role of women's leadership and empowerment in societal development. He encouraged students to make effective use of such programmes to enhance their personalities, strengthen their abilities, and prepare themselves to assume leadership roles in the future.

Dr. Azra Khatoon, Programme Coordinator, delivered a presentation on the theme of the workshop, emphasising the importance of self-awareness, resilience, and the courage to overcome fears. She encouraged students to recognise their strengths, work on their weaknesses, challenge restrictive stereotypes, and develop the confidence to lead. The session highlighted that leadership begins with self-belief and the willingness to take initiative.

The second day featured interactive activities aimed at strengthening communication, teamwork, and self-reflection. During the activity "Draw Me, Eyes Closed," one participant described an image while another attempted to draw it solely based on verbal instructions. The activity highlighted the importance of effective communication, active listening, and coordination in teamwork and leadership.

Another activity invited students to speak for three minutes about their strengths and weaknesses and reflect on ways to overcome their limitations. Students also shared their perspectives on prevailing community stereotypes and discussed how young people could challenge them through awareness, courage, and positive action. The activity encouraged participants to step out of their comfort zones, express themselves confidently, and overcome their fears.

The two-day workshop concluded with an emphasis on self-belief, resilience, effective communication, and collective action in nurturing confident and capable young women. The programme provided an engaging platform for students to reflect on their potential and recognise their role in bringing about positive change in society.

GDC Zanskar organises sensitisation programme on Himalayan Environment and Climate change



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

ZANSKAR: Government Model Degree College Zanskar organised a student sensitisation programme on November 12 to highlight the changing Himalayan environment, climate-related challenges and their implications for local communities. The programme was held under the patronage of Principal Dr. Amjad Ali Abassi.

The programme aimed to sensitise students from different schools about emerging environmental, geological and socio-economic challenges facing the Himalayan region, particularly the fragile mountain ecosystems of Ladakh and Zanskar.

The sessions covered six major areas of concern, including receding glaciers, changing water resources, landslides and floods, impacts on agriculture and biodiversity, implications for human lives and local communities, and the development of road and tunnel connectivity and its potential impact on tourism, communities and the environment.

Geologists Bindra Thusu and Sumit Singh participated as experts and shared their knowledge and perspectives on the changing Himalayan landscape and the challenges arising from environmental and geological transformations. Their interaction provided students with valuable insights into mountain ecosystems, climate change and the importance of sustainable development.

Students from various schools participated in the programme and gained awareness of the interconnected nature of these challenges. Emphasis was laid on developing scientific understanding, recognising local environmental vulnerabilities and promoting responsible development and community participation.

The programme highlighted the importance of educating young minds about the environmental sensitivity of the Himalayan region and encouraging informed thinking on conservation, disaster preparedness and sustainable development.

The initiative, conducted under the guidance of Principal Dr. Amjad Ali Abassi, reflects Government Model Degree College Zanskar's commitment to extending scientific awareness beyond the classroom and engaging students in issues of regional and societal importance.

Director, NIELIT Ladakh, Puntsog Toldan meets Deputy Commissioner Kargil, Rakesh Kumar



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

ZANSKAR: Director, National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) Ladakh, Puntsog Toldan, held a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner Kargil, Rakesh Kumar, IAS, on November 6 to discuss the progress, achievements, ongoing activities and future initiatives of NIELIT Kargil.

During the meeting, the Director briefed the Deputy Commissioner about various skill development programmes, short-term training courses, AI Courses digital literacy initiatives, and other educational and technical activities being undertaken by NIELIT Kargil for the benefit of students and youth of the region.

A key point of discussion was the upcoming Mega Job Fair Mela, proposed to be organised in December 2026 at Kargil. The event aims to provide a common platform for local youth, job seekers, employers and recruiting organisations, creating opportunities for employment, career guidance and professional development.

The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the initiatives and efforts of NIELIT Ladakh in promoting digital education, technical skills and employment opportunities in the region. He also discussed the importance of strengthening coordination and cooperation among various departments and stakeholders for the successful implementation of such initiatives.

The meeting concluded with a positive outlook towards further strengthening NIELIT's role in skill development, capacity building and employment generation in the Kargil district.

Whereas, Krishnadan Sinha, Date of Birth 01-07-1951, father of Kamal Kanti Sinha, NO. 15577411N Rank Hav R/o Village Patiala, Post Pechala, Karimganj State Assam Pin 788734 claimed that his name Krishnadan Sinha has been wrongly entered as Krishnadhan Sinha instead of Krishnadan Sinha and also Date of Birth 01-07-1951 has been wrongly entered as 02-05-1952 of 01-07-1951 in his son's Army record of, 102 Engr Regt C/O 56 APO and produced an affidavit duly verified by Notary public Leh with Certificate No. IN-LA-12296399346626Y to this office for making necessary correction. Hence the notice is hereby served through press to file objection if any in this office102 Engr Regt C/O 56 APO , within 7 days from date of publication failing which necessary correction will be made

Fortnightly News

DC Sankoo reviews infrastructure and academic requirements at Government Higher Secondary school

Principal highlights shortage of laboratory facilities, examination hall, library and other essential infrastructure; DC assures necessary action



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

ZANSKAR: Deputy Commissioner Sankoo, Imteeaz Kacho, accompanied by Sub-Divisional Magistrate Dr. Sarwar Shahzad and other officials, visited Syed Haider Rizvi Memorial Government Higher Secondary School, Sankoo, to assess its academic and infrastructural requirements and review the overall functioning of the institution.

During the visit, the Principal apprised the Deputy Commissioner of several pressing concerns, including inadequate space for laboratories, the need for a dedicated examination hall and shortages of essential equipment in various laboratories.

Other requirements highlighted included the construction of a kitchen and dining hall, establishment of a well-equipped library, upgradation of classrooms, and reconstruction of dilapidated toilets and washrooms.

Interacting with students, the Deputy Commissioner emphasised the importance of education, mental well-being and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. He advised students to stay away from drug abuse, maintain a positive outlook and seek timely support whenever they experience stress or depression.

He also encouraged students to make effective use of the library facilities and develop a regular reading habit.

The Deputy Commissioner assured the school authorities that the issues raised during the visit would be examined for appropriate intervention and necessary action.

Later, he visited the model polling station located within the school premises. Returning Officer Shakeel Ahmad received him and briefed him on the activities and functioning of the polling station.

GDC Drass organises geological field tour to Akchamal and Sankoo



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

DRASS: The Department of Geology, Government Degree College (GDC) Drass, organised a one-day educational field tour to Akchamal and Sankoo on November 11 for Semester 1 and Semester 3 students.

The tour aimed to provide students with first-hand field exposure and strengthen their understanding of geological concepts through practical observation and field-based learning.

During the visit, students explored various geological features and formations of the region, with particular emphasis on field geology, identification and classification of rocks, petrological characteristics and geological structures. They were also given practical demonstrations on identifying and measuring the dip and strike of rock beds, understanding their orientation and interpreting structural features in their natural settings.

The field tour provided students with an opportunity to connect theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom with actual field observations. They examined rock exposures, observed variations in lithology and learned about the significance of geological structures and basic techniques of geological field investigation.

The tour was conducted under the supervision and academic guidance of Dr. Shoib Maqbool and Husnain, who engaged students in field demonstrations, explained the geological significance of the selected locations and guided them in understanding various geological and petrological characteristics.

The Department of Geology expressed gratitude to the College Principal, Nasir Shabani, for his continuous encouragement, support and cooperation in facilitating the academic initiative. It appreciated his commitment to promoting experiential learning and student-oriented educational activities.

The department emphasised that field tours are an integral part of geological education, providing students with opportunities to develop scientific temperament, observational skills, analytical thinking and practical competencies.

It also reaffirmed its commitment to organising similar academic and field-based activities to enrich students' learning experiences and strengthen their understanding of geological sciences.

95 players participate in Ladakh Ice Hockey state team selection trials

30 players each to be shortlisted for men's and women's teams; structured training begins November 5 ahead of winter tournaments



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The Ice Hockey Association of Ladakh, with the support of the UT Administration of Ladakh on October 31 conducted the final round of selection trials for the UT Ladakh Ice Hockey State Teams at the NDS Ice Hockey Rink, Leh. The selection process, which commenced on October 25, witnessed enthusiastic participation from male and female players across the Union Territory.

For the first time, the Association invited open registrations through an online platform, providing aspiring players an opportunity to participate in the selection process. A total of 95 players registered and took part in the trials, including 75 male and 38 female players, as per the figures shared by the Association.

Following the completion of the selection process, 30 players each will be shortlisted for the men's and women's state teams. The final list of selected players, along with the results, will be declared on November 2, 2026.

The selected players will undergo structured training under experienced and qualified coaches to strengthen their technical skills, physical fitness and overall game performance ahead of the forthcoming winter tournaments. The formal training programme for both teams is scheduled to commence on November 5.

The Ice Hockey Association of Ladakh has appointed experienced coaches for both teams. Former Captain of the Indian Ice Hockey Team, Tondup Namgail, will coach the men's team, while Mushtaq Ahmed, Junior Coach of the Indian Ice Hockey Team, will take charge of the women's team. Mohammad Iqbal, a former Indian Ice Hockey Team player and ITBP representative, will serve as Assistant Coach for both teams.

To ensure proper monitoring of the players' health and physical fitness throughout the training period, physiotherapists and doctors deputed by the UT Administration will also extend medical support and professional guidance to the teams.

On the occasion, District Youth Services and Sports Officer (DYSSO) Tsering Tashi, along with other officials from the Sports Department, interacted with the selection committee members and players. They appreciated the efforts being made to strengthen ice hockey in Ladakh and extended their best wishes to the players for the upcoming winter tournaments.

Speaking on the occasion, Ice Hockey Selection Committee Member and Coach Tondup Namgail expressed happiness over the completion of the new Ice Hockey Rink in Leh, stating that the facility would provide players with an opportunity to practise throughout the year and significantly contribute to the development of the sport in Ladakh.

He further informed that the Association is planning to organise a 15-day residential training programme for the selected players, with the involvement of top-level coaches from outside Ladakh, to provide them with specialised coaching, enhance their technical skills and prepare them for the forthcoming winter tournaments.

He also expressed gratitude to the Sports Department, UT Ladakh, for its continued support to the Ice Hockey Association in organising such programmes and expressed hope that the same cooperation and encouragement would continue in the future.

Players participating in the trials also welcomed the initiative, particularly the decision to conduct the state team selection process well in advance of the winter tournament season. They expressed gratitude to the UT Administration and the Ice Hockey Association of Ladakh for providing them with an important opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and prepare for upcoming competitions.

The players expressed optimism that systematic training, improved sporting infrastructure and continued institutional support would help them enhance their performance and achieve better results in forthcoming tournaments.

DC Sankoo chairs introductory meeting with department heads, reviews public issues and developmental priorities



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

SANKOO: Deputy Commissioner, Sankoo, Imteeaz Kacho, on November 3, chaired an introductory meeting with heads of various departments of the newly formed Sankoo district at the Conference Hall of Suru Valley Division. Following a round of introductions, he reviewed the functioning of various departments, assessed ongoing developmental activities and discussed key public issues and priorities.

The meeting was attended by Superintendent of Police, Sankoo, Praveen Kumar; Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Sankoo, Dr. Sarwar Shahzad; Tehsildars; Executive Engineer, PDD, Kargil; Block Development Officers (BDOs); Block Medical Officer, Taisuru; Zonal Education Officers; and officers from various line departments.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on several important issues, including challenges faced by students and the education sector, the growing concern of drug abuse, cybercrime, road accidents, and measures required to strengthen public awareness and safety. The officers also deliberated on sustainable development initiatives and preparations for the forthcoming Panchayat elections.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasised the importance of effective inter-departmental coordination, accountability and timely resolution of public grievances. He urged all departmental officers to work in close coordination to ensure efficient delivery of public services and address issues affecting the general public.

While reviewing developmental activities, the Deputy Commissioner directed the BDOs to identify suitable works under convergence and ensure their implementation under the MGNREGA framework, thereby generating employment opportunities for local residents while promoting sustainable development.

He further stressed that all departments must adopt a coordinated approach, prioritise public welfare and ensure that government schemes and developmental initiatives effectively reach their intended beneficiaries.

In his address, the Superintendent of Police highlighted the need for greater community outreach, particularly among youngsters, to address issues such as drug abuse, cybercrime and other social evils, besides road accidents. He assured the support of the District Police in disaster management and community outreach campaigns.

TRI Kargil campus organises quiz competition to mark Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: The Tribal Research Institute (TRI), University of Ladakh, Kargil Campus, in collaboration with Team Stringmo, organised a quiz competition at PM Shri Government Middle School, Samar Pashkum, on November 12 as part of the ongoing Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas Pakhwada (November 1–15, 2026).

The programme commemorated the 151st birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda and aimed to familiarise students with his life and contributions, tribal freedom fighters, and the rich history, culture and traditions of indigenous communities.

Students participated enthusiastically in the competition, showcasing their knowledge of tribal heritage and history. The initiative also aimed to instil pride in indigenous identity and raise awareness about the significant contributions of tribal communities to the nation.

The programme highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting tribal culture, traditions and heritage among the younger generation.

LADAKH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

UNDER SOCIETIES REGISTRATION ACT XXI OF 1860 Regn. No. 27 Of 2020

Ladakh Football Association Elects New Executive Committee for the Term 2026-2030

Leh, Ladakh | 31 October 2026

The Ladakh Football Association (LFA) successfully conducted its Annual General Body Meeting (AGBM) cum Election 2026 on 31 October 2026 at Maachen Restaurant, Leh, Ladakh.

The meeting was attended by representatives and members from various district and regional football associations across the Union Territory of Ladakh. During the meeting, the new Executive Committee of the Ladakh Football Association was unanimously elected for the term 2026-2030.

The newly elected Executive Committee comprises the following members:

NEWLY ELECTED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2026-2030)

1. President: Stanzin Sonam
2. Vice President: Hani Hanifa
3. Vice President: Tsering Angchuk
4. Vice President: Kunzes Dolma
5. Treasurer: Stanzin Gyatso
6. Executive Member: Delex Namgyal (SPOM)
7. Executive Member: Mehroon Nissan (SPOM)
8. Executive Member: Tsering Namgyal (SPA)
9. Executive Member: Padma Lhamo (SPA)
10. Executive Member: Shanawaz Aziz
11. Executive Member: Tsering Namgyal
12. Executive Member: Eshay Tobgyal
13. Executive Member: Harpreet Bedi
14. Executive Member: Rehana Batool
15. Executive Member: Dechen Dolkar

APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL SECRETARY

Following the election, the newly elected President, Shri Stanzin Sonam, appointed Smt. Tsering Angmo as the General Secretary of the Ladakh Football Association for the term 2026-2030.

NOTICE

Change of Name

I, Arunabai Balu Jadhav Mother of Rank NK, Jadhav Avinash Balu R/o Jadhav Vasti, Near MVP college, VTC Manmad, PO Manmad, District Nashik (Maharashtra), Pin 423104, do hereby declare that in my son's Army record my name wrongly mentioned as Aruna instead of Arunabai Balu Jadhav as per affidavit no. R589670.

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