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OCTOBER 01-15, 2026

REACH LADAKH BULLETIN



In Conversation with

Muzammil Hussain | Co-Founder, Roots Ladakh · Founder Trustee & Principal Director, Himalayan Brown Bear Trust

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One year on, Ladakh awaits justice for September 24 victims

Martyrs' Day observed; families seek accountability, adequate compensation and release of judicial inquiry report



Photo Caption: Public gathering at NDS stadium during the observance of Martyrs' Day in Leh.

Stanzin Dasal

LEH: A year after the September 24, 2025 violence that claimed the lives of four young people, questions over the deaths, accountability and the circumstances that led to the firing remain unanswered, with the report of the judicial inquiry commission yet to be made public. Martyrs' Day was observed across Ladakh on September 24 to remember those who lost their lives during the agitation and to stand in solidarity with families who lost their children and loved ones. The day was marked by calls for justice, accountability and transparency over the events of last year.

declared September 24 as Martyrs' Day to commemorate 10 martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Ladakh between 1981 and 2025.

The earlier martyrs include Ven Lobzang Tsondu of Likir Monastery and Tashi Angchuk of Saspol, who lost their lives on January 24, 1981, during an agitation demanding Scheduled Tribe status for Ladakh.

On August 27, 1989, Nawang Rinchen of Samkar, Tsering Stobdan of Durbuk and Tsewang Dorjay of Saboo were killed in a firing incident at Leh's Polo Ground during an agitation for

Union Territory status.

The September 24, 2025 violence claimed the lives of late Havildar Tsewang Tharchin of Skurbuchan, Rinchen Dadul of Hanu, Stanzin Namgyal of Igoo and Jigmat Dorjay of Khar-nak. Stanzin Dorjay of Skidmang later became the fifth person associated with the incident to be remembered as a martyr by the LBA.

Paying tribute to the martyrs, LBA President Chering Dorje Lakruk said remembering their sacrifices were essential for the people of Ladakh and future generations.

"Justice has still not been delivered," Lakruk said while referring to the September 24, 2025 violence. He questioned why the judicial inquiry report had not been made public and said people had the right to know who ordered the firing and what led to the deaths and injuries.

The issue of compensation also featured prominently during the Martyrs' Day observance. On September 13, Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh Vinai Kumar Saxena sanctioned ₹15 lakh each to the next of kin of the four persons who died in the September 24 incident. The administration also approved ₹3 lakh for those who sustained major injuries and ₹1 lakh for those with minor injuries.

Former MP Ladakh Thupstan Chhewang termed the compensation inadequate for families who had lost their children and loved ones. He demanded compensation at least on par with the assistance announced in Delhi and called for a government job for one member of each affected family.

Apex Body Chairman Chering Dorje Lakruk

also questioned the compensation, saying the lives of Ladakhis were equally valuable. He appealed to people to remain united in seeking justice for those killed and injured.

Social activist Sonam Wangchuk, addressing the gathering, paid tribute to those who lost their lives and demanded justice for the victims.

Wangchuk alleged that unarmed protesters were subjected to excessive force and questioned the circumstances surrounding the firing. He said these issues should be established through the judicial inquiry.

He demanded the release of the inquiry report, saying it should clarify why the firing took place, whether a firing order was issued, how weapons were used and how the violence began.

Wangchuk said that if the report continued to remain unpublished, civil society could seek the formation of a "People's Tribunal" involving retired judges and other institutions to examine the events.

He also directly held Union Home Minister Amit Shah politically responsible for the events and demanded his resignation, arguing that accountability should extend beyond individual police personnel to the political and administrative levels.

The Martyrs' Day observance thus brought renewed focus on the September 24 violence, with families and civil society continuing to seek answers, accountability and the release of the judicial inquiry report a year after the incident.

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REACH LADAKH BULLETIN

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Published at: Reach Ladakh, Skara Yokma, Airport Road, near Councillor Quarter
Contact: +91 9858394403
+91 8899418322

Printed at: Ala Printing Press
3636 Katra Dina Baig
Lal Quan Delhi -110006

Leh Police recover stolen jewellery worth ₹70 lakh, arrest key accused

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Leh Police solved a well-planned theft at a jewellery shop in Nowshar Gali, Leh, within three days of receiving the complaint. The alleged key accused was arrested, and stolen jewellery worth approximately ₹70 lakh along with ₹4.30 lakh in cash was recovered, police said.

The theft was reported on September 19, when Sunil Kumar, a resident of Rajasthan and owner of a jewellery shop at Nowshar Gali, submitted a written complaint stating that unidentified persons had broken into his shop during the intervening night of September 18 and 19 and stolen jewellery and cash.

Police subsequently registered FIR No. 204/2026 under Sections 305(a) and 331(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Police Station Leh.

According to police, an inspection of the crime scene revealed that the theft had been carried out in a planned and systematic manner. Instead of breaking the main shutter, the alleged thieves entered through a tin door adjacent to the shop and broke through the stone wall on the right side, creating an opening to gain access to the premises.

After entering the shop, the accused allegedly stole jewellery and cash estimated to be worth ₹80-90 lakh and cut the CCTV wires before removing the DVR. With no significant clues available at the scene or from adjoining areas, police teams conducted searches and enquiries at various locations across Leh town to develop leads.



During the investigation, a white-coloured vehicle and three persons were reportedly noticed moving under suspicious circumstances around Polo Ground during the late hours. Police subsequently used technical analysis, human intelligence and other investigative resources to establish information about the vehicle's owner.

Following corroboration of the information, a police team comprising SI Dorjay Zangpo, SI Stanzin Kunkhen, Sgt Bilal Ahmed, Sgt Zakir Hussain, CT Stanzin Kunkhen and CT Shahid Hussain was deputed to Pattan, Baramulla, to apprehend the alleged key accused, identified as Nisar Ahmad Dar, son of Abdul Rahman Dar, resident of Chogul, Mirgund, Pattan, Baramulla.

According to police, during questioning and on the basis of the accused's disclosure, stolen jewellery worth approximately ₹70 lakh and ₹4.30 lakh in cash were recovered.

Police said the investigation revealed the involvement of three persons, including a juvenile, in the theft. The juvenile was

allegedly used to enter the shop by crawling through the opening created in the wall and subsequently bring out the jewellery and cash.

Police said necessary legal proceedings against the juvenile are being initiated in accordance with law, while efforts are continuing to apprehend another alleged accomplice who remains at large.

Police further stated that the accused persons were allegedly involved in multiple theft cases registered at different police stations in Kashmir. One of the absconding accused was reportedly recently released from jail after serving two years of imprisonment under the Public Safety Act.

The case was solved through sustained field investigation, technical analysis, human intelligence and other investigative resources, police said. The recovery of the stolen property and apprehension of the principal accused reflected the coordinated efforts of the investigation team.

L-G VK Saxena approves withdrawal of cases against 20 individuals in connection with September 24 violence in Ladakh.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: In a significant step towards fostering peace, public tranquility, and social harmony in Ladakh, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on September 23 approved the withdrawal of criminal cases against 20 individuals, related to the unfortunate violence that erupted in Leh on September 24 last year. The cases have been withdrawn under Section 360 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, on the recommendation of Ladakh Police following a comprehensive review of the status of investigations into the cases.

On September 24 last year, Leh witnessed severe unrest, following which multiple cases of rioting and arson were registered by the police. Out of the 87 identified accused in the rioting cases, 81 were arrested, and criminal proceedings began against them. Following the review, the Ladakh Police recommended that criminal charges against 20 of these accused, in FIR No. 144/2005, registered at PS - Leh, be formally withdrawn. The proposal was sent to the Lieutenant Governor for approval, and the same was granted by LG Saxena in the "larger interest of peace and public tranquility."

L-G Saxena said this decision would ensure that these 20 individuals, discharged of the criminal charges, move forward positively with their lives and careers. "By prioritising justice and healing over protracted litigation, the decision aims at fostering a more peaceful, united, and harmonious society in Ladakh. I extend my sincere gratitude to Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, for his constant guidance and sympathetic approach in matters pertaining to the victims and their families," L-G Saxena said.



The development comes just days after the Lieutenant Governor, on 13 September, had sanctioned compensation of Rs 15 lakh to the next of kin of each of the September 24 violence.

An ex-gratia of Rs 3 lakh for those with major injuries and Rs 1 lakh for minor injuries had also been approved by the Lieutenant Governor, reaffirming the Administration's solidarity with the victims and their families in their journey towards healing and overcoming the grief.

Cases have been withdrawn against the following persons:

Mohd Asif S/o Mohd Salim

Shaziya Parveen D/o Amman-ullah

Tsetan Norboo S/o Nima Wang-gail

Stanzin Morup S/o Tsewang Phunchok

Sonam Zangpo S/o Gonbo Dorje

Jigmet Thinley S/o Sham Lal

Shabir Hussain S/o Ahmad Shah

Sonam Togdan S/o Tashi Norphel

Urgain Namdol S/o Mephram Phuntsog

Tsering Gyalson S/o Phunchok Wangyal

Sonam Gurmet S/o Tashi Tsering

Zulfikar Ali S/o Mohd Shafi

Stanzin Chospheal S/o Tsering Stobdan

Ishey Tsering S/o Tsewang Stanzin

Rigzin Nurbo S/o Tundup Dorje

Rinchen Namgyal S/o Dorje Phunchok.

Jigmat Dorjay S/o Yountan Chospheal (Deceased)

Rinchen Dadul S/o Tsering Morup (Deceased)

Stanzin Namgail S/o Nawang Zotpa (Deceased)

Tsewang Thirchin S/o Stanzin Namgail (Deceased).

Fortnightly News

Chief Secretary holds consultative meeting with Ladakh Civil Society members



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, convened a consultative meeting with members of civil society from Ladakh on September 21 to discuss key administrative, developmental and political issues concerning the Union Territory, including constitutional safeguards, land rights, employment, culture, environment, education, drug abuse and other matters of public importance.

The interaction was attended by prominent members of the community representing diverse backgrounds and sections of society, including H.E. Palga Rinpoche; former MLA Deldan Namgyal; Rigzin Dorjay from the Ladakh Buddhist Association; Mohd. Shafi from Anjuman Moin-ul-Islam; Rev. Dechen Chamga from the Christian Association; Padma Shri awardees Chewang Norphel and Morup Namgyal; Honorary Captain Tashi Tsepel, Vir Chakra; former Ambassador Tsewang Namgyal; and Kunzes Dolma from the Women’s Forum.

The meeting was also attended by Administrative Secretaries and senior government officials of the UT Administration.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary said there was broad agreement on the need for constitutional protection for Ladakh. He said the protection should cover land, employment, culture, environment and natural resources.

He informed the participants that a new framework was being worked out under Article 371 to provide constitutional safeguards suited to the specific requirements of Ladakh. He said the proposed model was being developed considering the aspirations of the people of Ladakh and that it would be distinct from existing arrangements elsewhere in the country. He further said the draft would be discussed at the next meeting proposed to be held in the first week of October. Recent discussions between the Ministry of Home Affairs and representatives of the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance have also focused on a proposed elected UT-level body and the distribution of powers between it and the LAHDCs.

The Chief Secretary said direct elections to the proposed UT-level body were among the key suggestions emerging from the discussions. Further steps, including consideration of the proposed constitutional amendment by Parliament, would follow after consensus is reached on the framework. He also explained that separate legislation would subsequently be required to provide detailed provisions regarding the powers, functions and institutional arrangements of the proposed body.

The Chief Secretary also highlighted various recent administrative initiatives, including strengthening of the district-level administrative structure, posting of officers in the districts, upgradation of hospitals to district hospitals and progress towards Panchayat elections. He further informed the participants that Ladakh had recorded more than four lakh tourist arrivals so far this year, compared to around 3.35 lakh during the entire previous year.

The meeting also featured presentations on a range of developmental and social issues concerning Ladakh. DGP Ladakh Anand Jain, on behalf of the Ladakh Police, made a presentation on drug-related issues and sought the support of civil society members in creating awareness among the public. He expressed concern over the rising number of drug-related cases in Ladakh. Dr. Padma, Psychiatrist at SNM Hospital, also made a detailed presentation on drug abuse, highlighting various aspects of the issue and the need for greater awareness and intervention.

Commissioner Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment, Dr. Franklin, gave a detailed presentation on wildlife sanctuaries and settlement rights, while Divisional Commissioner/Revenue Secretary Shurbir Singh briefed the participants on the draft Conferment of Ownership and Land Rights.

Secretary, General Administration Department, Rudra Gaud, presented the employment status in the UT of Ladakh. Secretary, Higher Education, School Education and Cooperative, Banu Prabha, made presentations on educational transformation as well as the cooperative and dairy sectors.

Actively participating in the discussions, members of civil society put forth their views, suggestions and feedback on drug abuse, the draft Conferment of Ownership and Land Rights and other important issues.

Several participants appreciated and thanked the UT Administration and the Chief Secretary for facilitating the interaction and suggested that such consultative meetings should be held regularly in the future.

Noting the valuable feedback and suggestions received from the participants, the Chief Secretary said that similar interactions would be organized in the future as well. He urged members of different sections of society to continue putting forth their suggestions and feedback directly before the concerned departments and offices.

UT Ladakh administration, IIM Jammu sign MoU for satellite campus at Leh

Four-year BBA (Hons.) programmed to commence in October 2026 with initial intake of 60 students



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: In a major step towards expanding access to quality management education and creating new academic, professional and entrepreneurial opportunities for the youth of Ladakh, the Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh and the Indian Institute of Management Jammu (IIM Jammu) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on September 25 for the establishment of an IIM Jammu Satellite Campus at Leh, in the presence of Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

Under the initiative, the Satellite Campus at Leh will offer a four-year BBA (Hons.) programme with an initial intake of 60 students. The programme is scheduled to commence in October 2026, barely a month after the signing of the MoU. The infrastructure for the satellite campus has also been established within two months.

The proposed programme has received an encouraging response, with around 600 candidates expressing interest in admission against the 60 available seats, reflecting the demand for quality management education in Ladakh.

L-G Saxena said the significance of the initiative extends beyond the initial intake of 60 students, as the campus has the potential to emerge as a hub for knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship and professional development in Ladakh, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of Viksit Bharat.

The establishment of the Satellite Campus has pro-

gressed rapidly with the guidance and intervention of the Lieutenant Governor. Engagements between the UT Administration and IIM Jammu for introducing undergraduate courses in Leh began less than two months ago, and the campus infrastructure is already ready for the academic programme scheduled to commence next month.

Highlighting the importance of the initiative, the Lieutenant Governor said the establishment of the IIM Jammu Satellite Campus marked a turning point in the higher education system in Ladakh and would open new avenues of opportunity for young people in the region.

For years, students aspiring to pursue quality management and professional education have had to leave Ladakh, requiring them and their families to bear considerable expenses towards travel, accommodation, food, books and other necessities. For students from remote areas and families with limited financial resources, these expenses can pose a significant barrier to accessing quality higher education.

The Lieutenant Governor said bringing quality management education closer to home would help address these challenges and enable more talented young people from Ladakh to pursue their aspirations without necessarily having to bear the financial and personal hardships associated with moving outside the Union Territory.

From traditional skills to livelihoods: Women SHGs shine at LRLM-SARAS mela



By Jigmet Rinchen and Sonam Angmo

LEH: The Ladakh Rural Livelihood Mission (LRLM)-SARAS Mela 2026 was organised at Leh Main Market, providing women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) from Ladakh and other parts of the country an opportunity to showcase and market their products while connecting with a wider customer base.

This was the second edition of the SARAS Mela in Leh, with around 31 blocks of Leh participating in the mela, along with participants from Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan.

The main focus of the mela was on women Self-Help Groups. Through government support and financial assistance, these groups were encouraged to develop their businesses and improve their livelihoods. The mela provided them with a platform to introduce their products to new customers and understand what people were looking for in the market.

Different types of products were available at the stalls, including handicrafts, handlooms, traditional foods, clothing and other locally made products. The mela also helped promote some traditional products that were becoming difficult to find or were slowly disappearing. This gave these products a chance to reach more people and helped keep local traditions alive.

The mela was not only about selling products. It also gave women an opportunity to learn about packaging, branding, technology, marketing and modern ways of doing business. They could interact with customers, buyers and other SHGs and learn from their experiences.

The mela also received a good response from visitors. Around Rs 4 lakh in sales were recorded on the first day, while sales reached approximately Rs 5 lakh on the second day.

The LRLM-SARAS Mela therefore provided women with a place to sell their products, learn new skills, find new markets and become more confident entrepreneurs, while also helping promote and preserve the traditional products and culture of Ladakh and other participating regions.

At the SARAS Mela, local women entrepreneurs showcased a wide range of handmade products and traditional food items, reflecting the creativity and skills of women from different parts of Ladakh.

Among the products on display, a handmade snow leopard crafted using the dry-felting technique caught particular attention. The craft was made collectively by Jigmet Chorol and the women of her Self-Help Group from Saspol block.

Chorol said the idea of creating the snow leopard came from the animal’s strong presence in the area. By turning the region’s iconic wildlife into a handmade craft, she had combined local identity with traditional wool-based craftsmanship.

Alongside the snow leopard, Chorol also sold packets of locally prepared and organic food products, including roasted wheat flour, dried apricots and dried mint.

Speaking about the importance of such platforms, Chorol said that initiatives like the SARAS Mela provided valuable opportunities for women who generally stayed at home and might not have regular employment. According to her, such platforms allowed them to earn an income through their own skills while also introducing their products to a wider audience.

However, she also felt that greater visibility could help women entrepreneurs reach more customers. She said that if such products were given space in the main market, they could attract more attention and provide greater opportunities for women to expand their businesses.

The participation of women like Chorol at the SARAS Mela highlighted how traditional skills, local resources and entrepreneurship could come together to create opportunities for women while promoting Ladakh’s unique culture and products.

For women in Sankoo, traditional skills in tailoring and woollen craftsmanship were becoming a source of livelihood, as members of a local Self-Help Group (SHG) came together to produce and market handmade products.

Khatija, a member of the group from Sankoo, said the group conducted training programmes to help members develop skills in sewing, tailoring and making different woollen products. The training enabled them to stitch and prepare a variety of items that were later sold in local

markets, fairs and exhibitions.

The members sourced raw cloth and other materials from outside Kargil and used them to prepare products according to customer requirements. The group primarily made sweaters, woollen caps and other handmade woollen items, with members working collectively to prepare and sell the products.

Many of the members had developed their skills through training programmes and practical experience. They participated in local markets, fairs and exhibitions, including events organised under the Ladakh Rural Livelihood Mission (LRLM), where they got an opportunity to display and sell their products and interact directly with customers.

Some members had also travelled to other states to participate in fairs and markets. These platforms helped them reach new customers, gain experience in marketing and understand the demand for their products beyond the local market.

The members said being part of an SHG had helped them work collectively and support one another. Through the group, they could access guidance and financial assistance, including support related to loans. They also encouraged other women, particularly those without employment opportunities, to join SHGs to develop skills, generate income and become more financially independent.

The group received support from LRLM through initiatives such as Community Resource Persons (CRPs) and Revolving Funds (RF). Members received training and guidance to improve their skills, manage their activities and strengthen their livelihood opportunities.

The members also highlighted the role of exposure tours organised through LRLM, which provided them with opportunities to learn from other groups, gain practical experience and understand ways to improve their business activities. Such exposure encouraged them to explore new products and identify opportunities to expand their work.

In addition to woollen and tailoring products, the group had also started making sanitary pads. These pads were produced locally and were provided or sold to women within and outside the community, adding another dimension to their livelihood activities.

For the women of Sankoo, the SHG had become a platform to work collectively, strengthen their skills and turn traditional craftsmanship into livelihood opportunities while connecting their handmade products with wider markets.

The group received Rs 20,000 as a Revolving Fund when it started, while the Community Revolving Fund (CRF) provided Rs 40,000. The funds were used for activities such as purchasing food and additional feed for cattle during winter and buying thread and other materials.

The group also sold dairy products such as milk, curd and local butter.

Najima Bano, also from Kargil district, represented South Block. She was involved in making and promoting handmade local products, including keychains, curtains and woollen products.

She also worked with organic food products, including sea buckthorn chutney, sea buckthorn powder and sea buckthorn tea. The LRLM group members learned to work on different products and develop products according to local resources and market demand.

She mentioned that the group got opportunities to participate in exhibitions, where they could display and sell their products. These exhibitions helped them reach customers and promote their local products.

Visitors were particularly impressed by the local Ladakhi products and the talents of local people. The variety and quality of the products attracted attention, especially the locally made and traditional items.

The sea buckthorn products were also appreciated because of their growing popularity and interest among visitors.

The participation of these women at the SARAS Mela reflected how Self-Help Groups were helping rural women use traditional skills and local resources to create livelihood opportunities, while also providing them with access to wider markets.

NOTICE

No 860090191 Rank Inspector (GD) Rigzin Giatso S/o Padma Dorje R/o Sonam Khangsar, Forka Gongma, Chushul, Kariam Chushul PO Chushul, District Leh UT Ladakh, Unit 24th Battalion ITBP has claimed that his name Rigzin Giatso has been wrongly entered as Regzin Gaisto instead of Rigzin Giatso in the Service record of, Unit 24th Battalion, ITBP and produced an affidavit duly verified by Notary public Leh with Certificate No. IN-LA12069948573479Y to this office for making necessary correction. Hence the notice is hereby served through press to file objection if any in this office, Unit 24th Battalion ITBP within 7 days from date of publication failing which necessary correction will be made.

Fortnightly News

L-G approves over three-fold hike in Nambardars’ emoluments in Ladakh

Monthly emoluments of 247 Nambardars increased from Rs 1,500 to Rs 5,000



Photo Caption: Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena. Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, has approved an enhancement of the monthly emoluments of Nambardars (village heads), also known locally as Gobas, from Rs 1,500 to Rs 5,000, representing an increase of over 233 per cent.

The decision, which comes after a gap of 10 years, will benefit 247 Nambardars across the Union Territory. The enhancement addresses a long-standing demand of Nambardars and recognises their role as an important link between the administration and villagers.

The Lieutenant Governor said the move would not only provide greater financial support to Nambardars but also strengthen participatory governance and grassroots-level administration in Ladakh.

During his visits to villages across Ladakh, the Lieutenant Governor had received representations from Nambardars seeking an enhancement in their emoluments. On September 19, a delegation of Nambardars from different villages also met the Lieutenant Governor and highlighted that the existing emoluments were inadequate in view of their responsibilities.

Taking note of their concerns, the Lieutenant Governor directed the Chief Secretary to examine the matter and take appropriate action.

Nambardars play an important role at the grassroots level, serving as a bridge between the Government and villagers. Their responsibilities have gained significance with the increasing focus on last-mile delivery of public services and community-led government initiatives, particularly in remote and geographically challenging areas of Ladakh.

They help communicate the needs and concerns of villagers to the administration while also assisting people in accessing government schemes, welfare programmes and public services.

The Lieutenant Governor also noted that inputs provided by Nambardars had helped address several water-related issues in villages through interventions undertaken in recent months. He appreciated their proactive efforts in pursuing issues concerning their respective villages.

“The role of Nambardars (Gobas) is crucial because they remain closely connected with the people and serve as a vital link between the administration and our villages. The enhancement from Rs 1,500 to Rs 5,000 per month recognises their responsibilities and long-standing demand. I am confident this step will further strengthen their role in ensuring that development programmes, welfare schemes and government services reach every household in a timely and effective manner, while further strengthening participatory governance,” said L-G Saxena.

The revised emoluments have been fixed under the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Lambardari Act, 1972, and the Jammu and Kashmir Lambardari Rules, 1980, as applicable to the Union Territory of Ladakh.

The revised emoluments will come into force from the date of publication of the notification in the Official Gazette.

Chief Secretary interacts with National Defence College NDC-66 delegation in Leh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, interacted with the National Defence College (NDC-66) delegation, comprising senior officers from the Armed Forces and civil and foreign services, at the Council Secretariat, Leh, on September 22.

During the interaction, discussions focused on Ladakh’s infrastructure development, tourism, connectivity, environment, water conservation, renewable energy and the region’s strategic importance.

The Chief Secretary highlighted the outcomes of infrastructure development in Ladakh and the challenges posed by harsh winters. He apprised the delegation

of initiatives such as heated hostel facilities, which have significantly improved winter preparedness and living conditions.

Tourism was discussed in the context of sustainable growth, trekking, ecology, road connectivity and the need for an appropriate regulatory framework. The potential and economic viability of solar energy in Ladakh were also deliberated upon, along with the need for enhanced domestic and international air connectivity to support the region’s development and tourism sector.

On water conservation, the Chief Secretary highlighted initiatives under the vision of the Lieutenant Governor, including

the conservation of natural water resources and innovative measures such as Ice stupas in remote areas.

The delegation also discussed the GI tagging of Ladakh’s traditional products, the Indus River, the Kailash route and other issues of strategic, environmental and developmental significance.

The Chief Secretary also emphasised continued coordination between the civil administration and the Armed Forces, highlighting their strong partnership with local communities. He stressed the need to further strengthen community engagement to address emerging challenges and support sustainable development in Ladakh.

Leh approved as initial sitting place for High Court Bench in Ladakh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: On the recommendation of the Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on September 22 approved Leh as the initial place of sitting for the High Court Bench of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

The Registrar General of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, on September 15, 2026, had conveyed that the Chief Justice had recommended Leh as the initial place of sitting for the High Court Bench.

The recommendation of Leh is based on key judicial, administrative and infrastructural considerations, including the volume of litigation originating from the Leh Division, its administrative im-

portance and the availability of suitable infrastructure for commencing the functioning of the Bench.

According to the judicial data placed before the Administration, 423 cases are pending from the Union Territory of Ladakh, of which 252 cases originate from the Leh Division. Thus, nearly 60 percent of the pending cases in Ladakh originate from Leh.

The High Court has accordingly observed that establishing the initial sitting of the Bench at Leh would directly serve the convenience of a larger share of litigants and legal professionals from the region.

The High Court has also taken into consideration the fact that Leh is the ad-

ministrative headquarters of the Union Territory of Ladakh. “The city houses Lok Niwas, the Civil/Administrative Secretariat and the principal offices of various government departments. Accordingly, locating the Sitting Bench at Leh would facilitate coordination in cases involving the Administration, including legal representation, responses of government authorities and other administrative requirements associated with judicial proceedings,” the communication from the High Court stated.

The High Court has further noted that while permanent institutional infrastructure for the Sitting Bench would be developed as part of the long-term arrangements, suitable temporary infrastructure has already been identified in Leh. This would enable the judicial functioning of the Sitting Bench to commence without having to wait for the completion of permanent infrastructure and lengthy construction processes.

Following the approval, the Department of Law & Justice, in coordination with the Deputy Commissioner, Leh, will facilitate the necessary administrative arrangements, including protocols, residential arrangements for visiting Judges and staff, and security arrangements for the functioning of the Bench.

The approval has been accorded under Section 2(2) of the Union Territory of Ladakh (Sitting of Bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in Ladakh) Regulation, 2026 (No. 10 of 2026), promulgated by the President of India and brought into force with effect from September 5, 2026.

Medicinal plant camp organized at Palam as part of Ayurveda day



Photo Caption: Students of Government High School, Shey at Medicinal Plant Identification Camp-cum-Herbal Garden Open Day.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The State Medicinal Plant Board (SMPB), Union Territory of Ladakh, organised a Medicinal Plant Identification Camp-cum-Herbal Garden Open Day on September 22 at the CSIR-IIIM Experimental Research & Development Station/Farm, Palam, Leh, as part of the celebrations of the 11th Ayurveda Day 2026.

Students of Classes 5 to 10 of Government High School, Shey, along with their teaching faculty, participated in the programme. The programme was organised with the objective of creating awareness among students about the importance of medicinal plants, their identification, traditional uses, cultivation, conservation and sustainable utilisation.

Dr Phunchok Angmo, Consultant (Botany), State Medicinal Plant Board, UT Ladakh, highlighted the significance of Ayurveda Day and the importance of medicinal plants in traditional healthcare systems. She also spoke about the need to promote the cultivation, conservation and sustainable utilisation of medicinal plants, particularly in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem of Ladakh. She encouraged the students to develop an interest in learning about the region’s valuable medicinal plant resources and contributing towards their conservation.

A technical session was delivered by Zahir Ahmed, Technical Assistant, CSIR-IIIM, who provided the students with practical information on the identification of selected medicinal plants, their uses, cultivation methods and conservation practices. The session helped the students under-

stand the distinguishing features and significance of various medicinal plants and the importance of their sustainable management.

The students also visited the herbal garden at the CSIR-IIIM Experimental Research & Development Station/Farm, where they observed different medicinal plant species and learned about their characteristics and uses. The programme provided an interactive learning opportunity through field-level observation and interaction with technical experts.

The programme emphasised the importance of imparting knowledge about medicinal plants to the younger generation and creating awareness regarding their identification, cultivation, conservation and sustainable utilisation. Such initiatives are aimed at fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Ladakh’s rich medicinal plant diversity.

The State Medicinal Plant Board expressed its gratitude to the CSIR-IIIM Experimental Research & Development Station/Farm, Palam, for facilitating the programme and to Government High School, Shey, for the active participation of its teaching faculty and students.

The programme concluded with an emphasis on the need for continued awareness and educational activities to promote the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plant resources of Ladakh, in the spirit of the 11th Ayurveda Day 2026.

Ladakh Festival 2026 celebrates Ladakh’s rich culture, heritage and growing tourism potential



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The three day Ladakh Festival 2026 concluded in Leh after showcasing the region’s rich cultural heritage, traditional lifestyle, local cuisine, handicrafts, sports and emerging tourism experiences, while bringing together artists and cultural groups from Ladakh and different parts of India.

The festival was inaugurated on September 27 at the Polo Ground, Leh, by Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh Vinai Kumar Saxena, in the presence of a large gathering of spectators. The three day celebration aimed to highlight Ladakh’s living heritage, cultural identity and diverse tourism potential.

Over the years, the Ladakh Festival has evolved into an important platform for showcasing the region’s unique traditions, landscapes, hospitality and cultural heritage to visitors from across India and abroad.

This year’s festival featured a wide range of activities, including handicraft and handloom exhibitions, local cuisine, live demonstrations, photography exhibitions, traditional archery, astronomy and stargazing activities, mask dances, short film screenings, river rafting, polo matches and a sound and light show.

The festival also placed a strong focus on Ladakh’s traditional arts and community participation, with cultural groups from different parts of the Union Territory presenting their local traditions, folk music and dances.

The second day of the festival witnessed a series of vibrant cultural performances, drawing enthusiastic participation from both artists and audiences. Performers from different regions presented their traditional music and folk dances, reflecting India’s cultural diversity.

Artists from the North Zone, including Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, presented traditional folk performances, while artists from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands showcased the distinctive cultural traditions of the island region.

The evening programme also featured a special performance by the Ladakh Scouts Band, which added to the energy of the celebrations. Cultural groups from villages across Ladakh further highlighted the region’s diverse folk heritage, music and dance.

The festival also coincided with a significant rise in tourist arrivals to Ladakh. According to the UT Administration, as of September 16, 2026, Ladakh had recorded 4.37 lakh tourist arrivals, a figure already higher than the total tourist arrivals recorded during the entire year of 2025.

The final day continued with cultural performances, music and dance, bringing together artists, performers, cultural groups, local communities, visitors and guests. The concluding evening featured performances representing different cultural traditions and marked the culmination of the three day celebration.

The Ladakh Festival 2026 provided a platform for cultural exchange and community participation while showcasing Ladakh’s traditions, local talent and tourism experiences. The festival concluded with audiences responding enthusiastically to the performances and celebrations, marking the end of three days dedicated to culture, heritage, tourism and the diverse traditions of Ladakh and India.

Chief Secretary chairs consultative meeting on Nautor Land Rules in Leh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra on September 16 chaired a consultative meeting with prominent citizens, former public representatives, subject experts, religious leaders and representatives of socio-religious organisations and political groups to deliberate on issues concerning the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (Nautor Regularisation) Rules, 2026.

The meeting was convened to seek wider public and stakeholder views on the Nautor framework, particularly with regard to regularisation of eligible historical occupation, tenancy and proprietary rights, land-use regulation, field verification, eligibility criteria and the role of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs).

Divisional Commissioner Ladakh, Shubhir Singh, briefed the participants on the key provisions of the Nautor Rules, including the categorisation of Mustaqil and Gair Mustaqil tenancy, verification of eligible occupation, the prescribed cut-off date and the provisions relating to proprietary rights and leasehold arrangements. He also explained the procedure for verification and processing of eligible cases by the concerned revenue authorities and the LAHDCs.

During the extensive consultation, participants raised several issues relating to the historical nature of Nautor land, tenancy and ownership rights, old allotments, agricultural and pastoral land, land in remote and nomadic areas, and cases where historical occupation may not have been adequately reflected in revenue records.

Concerns were also raised regarding land associated with monasteries, mosques, schools and other religious and community institutions.

Stakeholders sought greater clarity on the transition from tenancy or occupancy rights to proprietary rights, land-use conversion, regularisation charges, leasehold provisions, eligibility of existing occupants and safe-

guards against misuse or encroachment. Participants also emphasised the need for adequate field verification and greater awareness among residents, particularly in rural and remote areas, before implementation of the framework.

Representatives highlighted the importance of protecting genuine historical occupants while ensuring that agricultural, pastoral and environmentally sensitive land is not diverted in an unregulated manner. Suggestions were also made for ensuring that the framework remains practical, transparent and responsive to the specific historical and geographical circumstances of Ladakh.

Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra said that the Administration is examining the Nautor issue with the objective of providing a clear, transparent and legally sustainable framework for addressing genuine historical cases while safeguarding public land and regulating future land use.

Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra said the Nautor framework would provide greater legal clarity to eligible historical landholders, facilitate productive use of agricultural land and enable access to institutional credit, including bank loans, subject to applicable norms. He said the framework would also help address longstanding historical and revenue-record issues relating to Nautor land.

He assured the participants that the suggestions and concerns raised during the consultation would be examined by the concerned revenue, legal and administrative authorities. He emphasised that the Administration would continue consultations with stakeholders and undertake necessary examination and refinement of the framework before its further implementation.

The Chief Secretary stated that the Nautor issue has important historical, livelihood, agricultural and socio-economic dimensions and therefore requires a balanced approach based on legal provisions, revenue records and ground realities. He reiterated that the interests of genuine occupants and the broader public interest would be duly considered while finalising the implementation framework.

The meeting was attended by former CECs and MLAs of LAHDC Leh, former councillors, retired revenue and administrative officers, representatives of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, Anjuman Imamia Leh, monasteries, Christian communities and other stakeholder organisations.

The Chief Secretary also briefed the gathering on the ongoing discussions concerning the broader administrative and constitutional framework for Ladakh. He informed the participants that discussions between representatives of the Apex Body Leh and Kargil and the Ministry of Home Affairs are continuing and that various demands and issues concerning Ladakh are under examination at the appropriate level.

L-G dedicates world’s highest-altitude twin flower fields in Leh to public

Over 25 lakh Lilium and Gladiolus planted across 40 acres to promote floriculture and alternative livelihoods



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena, on September 17 inaugurated the world’s highest-altitude twin flower fields at Choglamsar and Stakna in Leh, marking the 76th birth anniversary of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Located at an altitude of 10,600 feet, the two flower fields are described as the highest and largest flower fields in the country. Spread across 40 acres, the fields have more than 25 lakh high-value flowers, including around 24 lakh Lilium and one lakh Gladiolus.

The initiative marks a significant step towards agricultural diversification, farmer empowerment and the creation of alternative livelihood opportunities through commercial floriculture in Ladakh. The successful implementation of the project is also expected to provide a model for replicating high-altitude floriculture in other parts of the Union Territory.

The Choglamsar flower field was developed in a record two months. Plantation began on July 16, with the first blooms appearing in the first week of September. At Stakna, plantation of nearly 14 lakh Lilium began in August, with the first blooms expected towards the end of October.

The project seeks to leverage Ladakh’s unique climatic conditions and the growing national and international demand for high-value flowers to create new avenues for income generation, entrepreneurship and rural economic development. According to market rates cited for the project, Lilium fetches around Rs 60–70 per stick in wholesale markets, while retail prices are higher.

The Choglamsar flower park will function as a demonstration and model floriculture centre, where high-value flowers such as Lilium, Gladiolus, Tulips and other ornamental species will be cultivated.

Under the initiative, the Agriculture Department will develop the flower field during the first year and, at the

time of bloom, transfer it to selected Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and cooperative societies. The department will provide handholding support to the groups in marketing their produce in national and international markets.

From the following year, the cooperatives are expected to undertake commercial cultivation, harvesting and value addition of Lilium flowers themselves, creating a sustainable income avenue for local farming communities.

Local farmers are also being provided structured training in scientific floriculture, modern cultivation practices and commercial management to help establish floriculture as a viable enterprise.

Inaugurating the flower garden, the Lieutenant Governor said the initiative was aimed not merely at flower cultivation but at creating new livelihoods, skills and opportunities for the people of Ladakh.

He said the flower garden would also serve as a training and demonstration centre for farmers and youth, providing exposure to modern cultivation techniques, scientific farming practices and improved post-harvest management.

“Besides functioning as a recreational and educational space for residents and tourists, the flower fields will create an ecosystem where not only flowers, but also knowledge, skills and enterprises can grow. Floriculture is a high-value agricultural activity that can complement traditional farming, enhance farmers’ incomes and open new avenues for employment and entrepreneurship,” said L-G Saxena.

The flower garden was opened to the general public from September 18. A nominal entry fee of Rs 25 for adults and Rs 10 for children has been fixed, with the revenue to be utilised for the maintenance and upkeep of the garden.

The World of Juniors

World Space Week is an international celebration of science and technology, and their contribution to the betterment of the human condition. In 1999, the UN General Assembly proclaimed World Space Week by resolution 54/68. The main aim is to celebrate the contributions of space science and technology to the betterment of the human condition.

The celebration of World Space Week is under the guidance of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) based in Vienna, Austria.

The United Nations General Assembly declared in 1999 that World Space Week will be held each year from October 4-10. These dates commemorate two events:

- October 4, 1957: Launch of the first human-made Earth satellite, Sputnik 1, thus opening the way for space exploration
- October 10, 1967: The signing of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

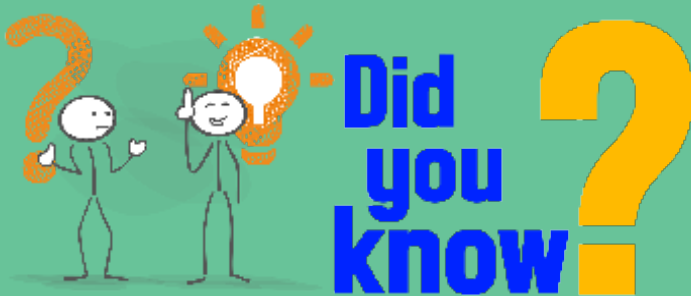
World Space Week OCTOBER 4-10

World Space Week consists of space education and outreach events held by space agencies, aerospace companies, schools, planetaria, museums, and astronomy clubs around the world in a common timeframe. These synchronized space events attract greater public and media attention. World Space Week 2025 achieved record scale:

- Up to 50,000 events
- Events in 102 nations

World Space Week is coordinated by the United Nations with the support of the World Space Week Association (WSWA). The WSWA leads a global team of National Coordinators, who promote the celebration of World Space Week within their own countries.

Courtesy: www.worldspaceweek.org



1. August has the highest number of births.
2. The most commonly used letter in the alphabet is “E.”
3. Penguin urine makes up about 3% of Antarctica’s glaciers.
4. In Italy, people call Mickey Mouse “Topolino.”
5. Grapes explode in the microwave.
6. Kissing for one minute will burn roughly 26 calories.
7. Only two countries use the color purple in their flags.
8. Oreos are technically vegan.
9. Dolly Parton once entered a lookalike contest, but lost to a man.
10. The Aztecs invented popcorn.
11. The average person falls asleep in seven minutes.
12. Rats can laugh.
13. To avoid crying while cutting onions, try holding a piece of bread in your mouth.
14. Hippos kill more people than sharks. (Still think Fiona is super cute?)
15. The average person will unknowingly swallow about eight spiders in their lifetime.
16. Armadillos have four babies each time and they’re always the same sex.
17. The fortune cookie didn’t actually originate in China, but in San Francisco.
18. On a dark night, the human eye can detect the light of a candle from more than a mile away.
19. A cat has 32 muscles in its ear and more than 100 vocal chords.
20. Also, cat urine glows under blacklight.

Courtesy: www.scarymommy.com

SoulSpeak

Dr. P.P. Wangchuk
One mouth to speak,
two ears to listen



It will do us good to remind ourselves of this proverbial wisdom: God has given us only one mouth to speak but two ears to listen. Therefore, the need to speak and hear proportionately is of utmost importance. The word ‘proportionate’ here denotes two things: That one must speak only as much as needed, not a word more, not a word less; and, secondly, that one must react with sense and sensibility so as not to hurt others.

Only those who listen can give a correct and sensible response; and those who don’t listen can only add to the noise, confusion and tension in a particular situation. And that may lead to unseen problems that one may not be able to handle.

Therefore, try to listen as much as possible, and try to speak as little as possible because, as they say, silence is gold. And, as someone had said, the more he spoke, the more he made mistakes. So, he chose to speak less and listen more. Wisdom lies in learning from others and that can be done only if you are a keen listener.

But that does not mean that you should keep your mouth shut all the time. Speak, but be relevant and effective so that others take you seriously and develop faith in you. Speaking briefly and relevantly also gives a greater punch to your speech, and hence the impact is far more. You gain others’ trust and regard. They take you as a wise man and they may even come and consult you on various issues quite often.

A man of few words saves time for himself and for others too. He is on the dot and refuses to get beyond the sphere of what he is needed to speak on. Therefore, you have the saying that you speak more and loudly when you have nothing to say.

An anonymous quote has it all: “Listen a hundred times, ponder a thousand times, but speak only once.”

Shall we do that? Yes, we need to. Words of great wisdom!

Courtesy: WongWorld

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

Fortnightly News

In Conversation with
Muzammil Hussain | Co-Founder, Roots Ladakh · Founder Trustee & Principal Director,
Himalayan Brown Bear Trust

Q. Tell us about your journey from leaving Kargil during the 1999 war to returning and working for its people and identity.

I was thirteen, in the 7th grade, when the Kargil war broke out in 1999. Like many families in Kargil, my parents felt that the safest thing was to send me away to continue my education. At that age, I obviously didn't understand the larger implications of what was happening. I only knew that suddenly I was leaving home because there was a war.

Ironically, being away from Kargil is what eventually made me understand Kargil better.

As I grew older, I began travelling, studying and working outside the region. I had the opportunity to see many parts of India and work in different places. And whenever people asked me where I was from, I realised how little they actually knew about Kargil. For many people, Kargil was simply the name of a war. Sometimes people didn't even know where it was. That bothered me deeply because I knew that the Kargil I had grown up in was much more than that.

It was a place with an extraordinary history of trade, movement and cultural exchange. It was a place where different communities, languages and traditions had interacted for centuries. But much of that story had disappeared behind the dominant narrative of conflict.

The 1999 war destroyed homes and infrastructure, but I gradually realised that wars also damage something less visible - people's relationship with their own identity, history and culture. When I eventually returned to Kargil, I didn't have a grand plan. I simply felt that I wanted to contribute to the place I came from. Roots Ladakh became one way of doing that, and over time our work expanded into heritage, museums, conservation and community initiatives.

In many ways, my journey has been about coming back to understand what I had left behind and then trying to make that understanding useful to the place I call home.

Q. You founded Roots Ladakh with the vision of showing Kargil beyond its conflict history. What inspired you to take this initiative, and how has your journey been so far?

The initial inspiration was quite personal. I was frustrated by how narrowly Kargil was perceived outside. People associated it almost entirely with the 1999 war, while I knew that the war represented only one chapter of a much older and much richer story. In 2013, my brother Tafazzul and I started Roots Ladakh with a

Interviewed by Sonam Angmo



MESSAGE TO THE READERS

“Kargil has a story far beyond the war that made its name known to the world. Come explore its landscapes, heritage, culture and communities; walk its lesser-known trails, discover its hidden corners and experience the warmth of a place that deserves to be seen through a wider lens.”

simple but stubborn belief that if people actually came to Kargil, met the communities, walked the trails, and heard the real stories, the war-zone image would fall away on its own.

We wanted to use tourism not simply as a business, but as a tool for changing perceptions. We started exploring the less-known landscapes, villages, cultural traditions, trekking routes and histories of Kargil. It's been over a decade now, and the journey has moved well beyond curating treks and offbeat, educational travel experiences. We ventured into projects that were not traditionally considered tourism projects heritage documentation, community museums, rural experiences, storytelling, guide training and conservation. It grew into building community-run tourism models - projects like Unlock Hunderman: Museum of Memories, where we turned a 300-year-old abandoned border village into a living museum that tells stories of resilience and everyday life rather than just war. We've tried to keep Roots Ladakh rooted in the idea that tourism should put money and pride back into local hands, not just bring visitors through. Over the years, the journey has been full of experimentation. Some ideas worked, some didn't. But the underlying principle has remained the same: Kargil doesn't need to borrow an identity from somewhere else. It needs to recognise, document and communicate its own.

Today, I see Roots Ladakh less as a travel company and more as a platform through which we can create conversations around place, culture, nature and livelihoods.

It hasn't been a straight line - there's been a lot of trial, error and patience involved in convincing both travellers and our own community that Kargil deserved to be seen differently but seeing that shift happen, even gradually, has been worth every bit of it.

Q. You have received the Outlook Traveller Gold Award and have been featured by platforms such as National Geographic and Conde Nast Traveller. What do these recognitions mean to you, and how do you see them contributing to Kargil's story?

Awards and recognition are gratifying, of course, but I don't see them as personal achievements in isolation. The most meaningful part for me is that they create a larger audience for a story that originated in Kargil.

Recognitions like the Outlook Traveller Indian Responsible Tourism Gold Award, being named among Condé Nast Traveller's "50 Amazing Ambassadors of Sustainable Travel" and "50 People to Know in the Himalayas," or being featured by National Geographic and in the documentary Giants of the Himalayas, these matter to me less as personal accolades and more as validation of an ap-

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Fortnight Highlights



A one day Demonstration and Training Programme for Anganwadi Helpers was organised at SIHM Leh by ICDS Department Leh, as part of the ongoing Poshan Mah under the theme “Hot Cooked Meals”.



Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor (CEC), LAHDC Kargil, Dr Mohd Jaffer Akhoun interacted with the team of super-specialist doctors from AIIMS New Delhi participating in the medical camp at QAAM Government District Hospital, Kurbathang, Kargil.



A Shramdaan for Swachhta (Cleanliness Drive) was successfully conducted at the 11th Edition of Zaskar Festival venue at Sani, following the conclusion of the festival. The cleanliness drive was organised with the active participation and support of Ama Tsokspa, Government Degree College Zaskar, Government Higher Secondary School, residents of Sani village, Heads of Departments (HODs), and staff from various government departments.



A four-member team from the CBSE Academic Unit, New Delhi, visited the DIET Leh Centre and Boys Higher Secondary School reviewed the ongoing remedial coaching classes for students of Classes 10 and 12 under the one-month expert teaching programme. The CBSE team comprises Ms. Anjali Chhabara, Shri Al Hilal Ahmed, Dr. Meena Sehrawat, and Ms. Prachi Dixit, Additional Directors and Associate Professors, who are visiting Ladakh from 12 to 22 September 2026. As part of the initiative to strengthen learning outcomes and prepare students for the forthcoming CBSE examinations, the team is providing academic support and expert guidance to teachers and students in Science, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Economics.



As part of the extensive UT-wide Drug Awareness Campaign, Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena on September 17 led the UT-wide Drug Awareness Padyatra under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, reaffirming the Administration's commitment to building a Drug-Free Ladakh.



A five-day training programme on Dyeing and Embroidery, organised by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Srinagar, commenced in Leh. The training aims to empower local artisans with advanced skills in dyeing and embroidery, enhance traditional craftsmanship, and promote innovation, product development and entrepreneurship in Ladakh.



A week-long workshop on butter sculpture & Torzo was organised by the Ladakh Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (LAACL), Leh, in collaboration with the Ladakh Gonpa Association, showcasing traditional Buddhist art and craftsmanship.



As part of the Ladakh Festival 2026, a Women's Polo Exhibition Match was held at the Shagaran Polo Ground, Chuchot. The Polo Match Organized in collaboration with the Animal Husbandry Department and Indus Chuchot Polo Club. The Animal Husbandry team emerged victorious, winning the match by 5-3 score.

Fortnightly News

In Conversation with Muzammil Hussain | Co-Founder, Roots Ladakh · Founder Trustee & Principal Director, Himalayan Brown Bear Trust

...Continuity of page 5

proach: that community-first, conservation-minded tourism can actually work in a place like Kargil.

What they really do is put Kargil on maps and in conversations it was never part of before. When a global platform writes about Kargil in the context of sustainable travel or wildlife conservation instead of conflict, that’s a small but real correction of the narrative I’ve spent years trying to change. It also brings a certain credibility that helps us open doors with the tourism department, with conservation partners, with travellers who might otherwise never have considered Kargil. So I see these less as a finish line and more as tools; each one is a chance to keep redirecting attention toward the Kargil we actually live in.

Q. From tourism and heritage to the conservation of the Himalayan brown bear through Drenmo, your work covers many different areas. What motivates you to keep giving back to your community and the environment?

They all come from the same root, really a sense of responsibility to the place that raised me. Tourism, heritage and conservation might look like separate tracks, but in Kargil they’re deeply entangled. The Himalayan brown bear, Drenmo, as we call it locally, was increasingly coming into conflict with villagers in Drass as its habitat shrank and encounters grew more frequent, sometimes ending badly for both bears and people. Watching that unfold so close to home, and realising conservation here couldn’t be separated from people’s daily lives and livelihoods, is what pushed me to help start what’s now the Himalayan Brown Bear Trust.

What keeps me going is seeing tangible shifts. Villagers who once reacted to a bear encounter with panic or retaliation now know how to respond calmly; young people from Drass and Kargil trained as nature guides are finding dignity and income in protecting a species rather than fearing it; solar deterrent lighting is reducing conflict in remote villages. That kind of visible, community-owned change is deeply motivating. At the end of the day, whether it’s a museum, a trekking trail or a bear corridor, the work is really about the same thing: helping my community see and value what’s already theirs.

I have seen enough of Kargil to know that there is enormous potential here, but also enough to know that potential doesn’t automatically become reality. Someone has to document it. Someone has to experiment. Someone has to fail and try again.

I feel fortunate that I have been able to do some of that work in my own backyard. Perhaps that’s what keeps me going.

Q. Having travelled, climbed mountains, worked with wildlife and promoted Kargil to the world, what is one thing your journey has taught you that you would like the younger generation of Ladakh to understand?

I would tell young people that you don’t have to leave your roots behind in order to become successful. But you also shouldn’t romanticise your roots so much that you stop questioning them.

I spent years outside Kargil, and that distance was extremely important to me. It allowed me to see my own home with fresh eyes. I learned from other places, met different people, travelled, studied and built skills. But eventually I realised that all of that knowledge became much more meaningful when I brought it back home.

So I don’t think the answer is that every young person should stay in Ladakh. Leaving can be important. Education outside can be important. Exposure to the world is important. But when you go out, learn something. Build something. Develop a skill. Understand how other places work. And then ask yourself what that knowledge can do for the place you come from.

Ladakh has incredible landscapes, cultures and traditions, but our future cannot depend only on other people coming here to consume them. We need young Ladakhis who become researchers, entrepreneurs, conservationists, filmmakers, designers, mountaineers, writers, scientists and storytellers and who are able to build those careers on their own terms.

Ladakh doesn’t need another generation that simply leaves because there are no opportunities here. And Ladakh doesn’t need a generation that stays here without creating new opportunities either. We need people who can move between the two worlds.

Multi-stakeholder workshop on human-wildlife conflict mitigation held in Drass



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

DRASS: In a major initiative to strengthen human-wildlife coexistence and community safety, a multi-stakeholder workshop on Human-Brown Bear Conflict Mitigation and understanding human-wildlife interactions was organised in Drass by WWF-India in collaboration with the District Administration and Wildlife Department on September 23.

The workshop was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Drass, Inteeaz Kacho (JKAS); Superintendent of Police Drass, Ish-tiyaq Kacho (JKPS); Wildlife Warden, Kargil, Ankit Sinha (IFS); Assistant Professor, GDC-Drass, Dr. Javed Iqbal, Block Veterinary Officer (Animal Husbandry), Dr. Asif Hussain and other officers, former ADC-Kargil Barkat Ali Nizami, Lambardars of various villages, representatives of Himalayan Brown Bear Trust and Wildlife & Nature Trails, stakeholders, researchers and wildlife enthusiasts. WWF-India was represented by Preet Sharma, Senior Project Officer; Manu Mohan, Senior Project Officer and Mohd Kazim, Project Officer.

During the workshop, the Deputy Commissioner sought detailed information regarding the population, distribution and movement patterns of Himalayan brown bears in Drass. Researchers informed the participants that significant brown bear presence has been recorded in the Mushko Valley and other parts of Drass District. The researchers also

shared findings from their extensive field studies and explained the technical interventions required for effective conflict mitigation.

The experts briefed the participants about the behaviour and feeding patterns of Himalayan brown bears. It was explained that brown bears generally tend to maintain distance from humans. However, while searching for food, they may enter settlements and cause damage to livestock, poultry, stored dry ration and other property, it was added. Seasonal changes in their food habits and movement were also discussed in detail.

Local representatives shared their experiences of bear-related losses, particularly involving livestock and poultry, with some residents highlighting how repeated incidents have discouraged households in vulnerable areas from keeping poultry. The participants also raised concerns regarding property losses and the safety of settlements situated close to bear habitats.

The workshop discussed several practical conflict-mitigation measures, including installation of focus lights in vulnerable locations, early-warning mechanisms, stronger protective corrals for livestock and poultry, proper storage of dry ration, improved waste management and systematic tracking and monitoring of bear movements.

The visiting researchers presented detailed observations from their

work on Himalayan brown bears and stressed the importance of scientific monitoring, technical support and community participation. The discussions emphasised that site-specific measures are essential, as the nature and intensity of human-bear conflict may vary from one village to another.

Wildlife Warden, Kargil, Ankit Sinha, highlighted the need for evidence-based interventions and coordinated action between the Wildlife Department, local administration, researchers and communities. Issues concerning compensation for livestock and property losses were also discussed during the interaction.

Superintendent of Police Drass, Ish-tiyaq Kacho (JKPS), shared observations regarding bear movement and incidents of poultry depredation and emphasised strengthening village-level awareness and community safety measures.

In his address, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the research and field interventions undertaken by WWF-India and other experts. He stressed that conservation efforts should simultaneously protect the Himalayan Brown Bear and the livelihoods and safety of local communities. Further, he highlighted the major transformation in perception of residents of Drass vis-à-vis coexistence with wildlife especially the Himalayan Brown Bear. He pointed out the need for building an entire economy around the conversation of this elusive and much-loved animal. He thanked the organizers for bringing all stakeholders together under one roof to discuss policy matters, mitigation measures, need for coordinated efforts and steps for behavioural change.

Recognising the Himalayan Brown Bear as an important part of Drass’ natural heritage, the Deputy Commissioner also highlighted the potential of organising a Brown Bear Festival in Drass to promote conservation awareness, community participation, scientific understanding and responsible nature-based tourism.

Training-cum-awareness programme on aquaculture insurance held in Leh

Fish farmers sensitised about insurance coverage and benefits under PM-MKSSY



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The Fisheries Department, Leh, organised a day-long training-cum-awareness programme on aquaculture insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY) at the Conference Hall of the Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Leh, on September 18.

The programme was attended by progressive fish farmers from different parts of Leh district, along with field and administrative staff of the Fisheries Department. It aimed to create awareness among fish farmers about aquaculture insurance and the financial protection available against various risks associated with fish farming, particularly under the challenging climatic conditions of Ladakh.

Mohd Iftiqar Hussain, Insurance Specialist, National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad, delivered a detailed presentation on the provisions of aquaculture insurance under PM-MKSSY, covering eligibility, premium incentives,

insurance coverage and benefits available to fish farmers.

Representatives of the Agriculture Insurance Company also made a presentation on aquaculture insurance, explaining insurance coverage, premium structure, risk assessment, documentation, claim procedures and settlement of claims. They also addressed practical issues and queries related to insurance coverage for trout raceways and other aquaculture systems.

Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Director Fisheries, Leh, Murtaza Ali, highlighted the importance of aquaculture insurance in protecting the investments and livelihoods of fish farmers against unforeseen losses. He urged eligible fish farmers to make maximum use of the scheme and emphasised the need to expand insurance coverage to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of the fisheries sector in Ladakh.

During the programme, partic-

ipants were informed about the premium incentives available under the scheme. General-category fish farmers are eligible for a 40 per cent incentive on the insurance premium paid, while SC, ST and women beneficiaries are eligible for an additional 10 per cent incentive, taking the total support to 50 per cent.

The participants were also sensitised about insurance protection against eligible risks, including floods, landslides, earthquakes, sudden temperature variations, water pollution, diseases and other unforeseen events affecting aquaculture operations.

Hussain also conducted a live demonstration of the National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP), explaining the registration process and procedures for availing benefits under the scheme.

The programme concluded with an interactive session during which fish farmers raised queries regarding insurance coverage, premium payment, claim settlement, documentation and risk assessment. Experts from NFDB and the Agriculture Insurance Company addressed the queries.

The Assistant Director Fisheries, Leh, urged eligible fish farmers to register on the NFDP and avail themselves of the benefits of aquaculture insurance to safeguard their investments and contribute to the sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the district.

From textbooks to hands-on learning: Middle School Skara students explore Science at DIET Leh STEM Lab



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: Students of Middle School Skara Leh visited the STEM Lab at the District Institute of Education & Training (DIET), Leh on September 22 where they participated enthusiastically in an engaging, activity-based science learning session.

The session provided students with an opportunity to move beyond the conventional classroom setting and experience science through seeing, doing, and discovering. Textbook concepts were brought to life through interesting demonstrations and activities, making learning more

meaningful while fostering curiosity and a spirit of inquiry among the young learners.

Chetna Sharma and Kunzes Dolma, Senior Lecturers explained scientific concepts in a simple, interactive, and enjoyable manner. They not only connected textbook knowledge with real-life applications but also encouraged students to ask questions, think critically, and explore scientific ideas beyond the classroom. Their engaging style of teaching, combined with practical demonstrations, helped demystify complex concepts and made science

approachable for young learners. By fostering curiosity and confidence, they inspired students to view science as a subject of discovery rather than rote learning.

Students participated actively in the demonstrations, exploring how scientific principles studied in classrooms work in real-life situations. The hands-on approach made learning enjoyable and encouraged students to observe, question, explore, and think scientifically.

Tsering Angmo, Lab Assistant, guided the students in familiarising themselves with laboratory apparatus and equipment, explaining their names, uses, and basic handling. Jigmet Namgyal, Media & Technical Assistant, provided technical and media support, ensuring smooth conduct and documentation of the session.

Teachers and students expressed their appreciation, describing the visit as interesting, engaging, and enriching. The enthusiasm displayed by the students reflected their keen interest in exploring science through practical and experiential learning.

121 Infantry Brigade hands over items worth ₹30 lakh to CWSN school Kargil



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: In a significant gesture of support for inclusive education and the welfare of children with special needs, the 121 Infantry Brigade on September 28 handed over various items worth approximately ₹30 lakh to the Children with Special Needs (CWSN) School, Kargil, under Operation Sadbhavna.

The items were formally received by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Kargil, Ghulam Mohammad, from Col. Harikrishnan N, Deputy Commander, 121 Infantry Brigade Group.

The assistance includes therapeutic equipment, air conditioners, RO water purifiers, water dispensers, furniture, stationery, kitchen items and other essential materials re-

quired for the smooth functioning of the school.

The support is expected to strengthen the school’s facilities and improve the learning environment for children with special needs. At present, 40 students from different parts of the district are enrolled at the school and benefit from its specialised educational and support services.

Speaking on the occasion, ADDC Kargil Ghulam Mohammad expressed gratitude to the Indian Army, particularly the 121 Infantry Brigade, for its assistance and continued commitment to the welfare of the people of Kargil.

He appreciated the Brigade’s con-

tribution towards the establishment and strengthening of the CWSN School and said the assistance would go a long way in providing better facilities, care and educational opportunities to children with special needs.

The initiative reflects the Indian Army’s continued efforts under Operation Sadbhavna towards community welfare, inclusive development and support for vulnerable sections of society in the region.

The District Administration Kargil also appreciated the 121 Infantry Brigade for its contribution towards creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for children with special needs.

Fortnightly News

State-level Archery competition concludes with enthusiastic participation



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KHALTSE: Team Kargil emerged as the winner in the girls' category, while Team Leh secured the winner position in the boys' category at the two-day State-Level Archery Competition held at Khamtsi, Sham District on September 22.

In the girls' category, Team Kargil secured the winner position, while Team Leh emerged as the runner-up. In the boys' category, Team Leh emerged as the winner, while Team Kargil secured the runner-up position.

The competition was organised as part of the celebrations of National Sports Day 2026 and Youth Engagement Month (August 29–September 29, 2026), with the objective of promoting sports, encouraging youth participation and providing young athletes with opportunities to showcase their talent.

A total of 27 participants, including boys and girls, took part in the competition. The participants competed in the 18–35 age category, demonstrating their skills, discipline and sportsmanship throughout the event.

The closing ceremony was graced by Deputy Commissioner, Sham, Kunzes Angmo (JKAS), as the Chief Guest, while SSP Sham, Aijaz Malik, attended the occasion as the Guest of Honour. The programme was also attended by Tsering Tashi, District Youth Services & Sports Officer; Mohd Sharif Bhat, Director, Save the Children; ZEO Khamtsi; ZEPO Khamtsi; along with officials, technical staff, coaches and participants.

The competition was conducted under the supervision of Issa Ghulam, ZPEO Khamtsi, along with officials and technical staff of the Youth Services & Sports Department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Guest appreciated the efforts of the Youth Services & Sports Department in providing sporting opportunities to young athletes. She encouraged the participants to continue working hard and uphold the true spirit of sportsmanship.

At the conclusion of the competition, prizes, mementos, certificates and cash prizes were distributed among the winners and runners-up in recognition of their performances.

Chief Secretary engages with Ladakh students on skills, innovation and emerging career opportunities



Photo Caption: During the launch of the 2025 edition of Singey Khabab, annual magazine.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, interacted with students of EJM College and the University of Ladakh at EJM College, Leh, on September 21, in an engaging session centred on artificial intelligence, emerging career opportunities, skill development, leadership, entrepreneurship and the rapidly changing world of work.

Principal, EJM College, Stanzin Yangdol, highlighted the contribution of higher education to the development of Ladakh's youth. She noted that the Chief Secretary's interaction with students reflected the UT Administration's commitment to strengthening higher education and creating greater opportunities for students in Ladakh. She also highlighted the college's academic legacy, newly introduced programmes, academic activities and operational hostel facilities.

The programme was attended by Dean, College Development Council, Tsewang Motup; Principal, EJM College, Stanzin Yangdol; Staff Officer Mozes Kunzang; faculty members; and students of the University of Ladakh and EJM College. The 2025 edition of Singey Khabab was also launched by the Chief Secretary and other dignitaries.

During the interaction, the Chief Secretary made a detailed presentation on a wide range of contemporary issues and emerging trends, including artificial intelligence and automation, the changing nature of job opportunities, future leadership skills, reverse globalisation, the emerging post-truth world, investing in new skills, climate change, entrepreneurship and the future of young people.

Drawing on developments associated with technology leaders such as Jensen Huang, Sam Altman and Demis Hassabis, he highlighted how rapid advances in AI and computing are transforming professional landscapes. He stressed the need for young people to understand, adapt to and effectively use emerging technologies.

He highlighted the rapid evolution of AI and technology, noting its growing applications in areas ranging from coding and computing to healthcare, diagnostics and robotics. He urged students not to fear technological change but to strengthen uniquely human capabilities such as critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, communication, judgement and leadership, while learning to use new technologies effectively.

L-G VK Saxena inaugurates Ladakh's first three-tier Multi-Level Parking Facility in Leh, disburses EV subsidies and flags off EV demonstration rally

Initiatives aimed at optimising limited urban space, easing congestion and promoting clean mobility in Ladakh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on September 28 inaugurated Ladakh's first three-tier Multi-Level Stacked Parking Facility at the District Motor Garage in Leh, disbursed subsidy cheques to beneficiaries who purchased electric cars under the Ladakh EV Policy, and flagged off an Electric Vehicle Demonstration Rally.

The three initiatives are aimed at optimising limited urban space, easing congestion and promoting cleaner mobility in the Union Territory.

With Leh witnessing growing urbanisation, increasing tourist footfall and rising mobility requirements, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised the need for infrastructure that makes efficient use of limited land while addressing congestion and reducing pollution and carbon emissions from transportation.

The three-tier Multi-Level Stacked Parking Facility, the first of its kind in UT Ladakh, has a capacity to accommodate 30 vehicles. The facility has been designed to make better use of scarce urban land, increase parking capacity and ease pressure on public spaces in Leh.

L-G Saxena said projects such as these demonstrate the importance of adopting smart infrastructure solutions in a region where land is limited and urban areas are experiencing increasing pressure.

The Lieutenant Governor also highlighted the Ladakh Electric Vehicle and Allied Infrastructure Policy as an important step towards promoting clean mobility in the Union Territory. Under the policy, subsidies and incentives are provided to eligible beneficiaries purchasing electric vehicles to encourage the transition towards cleaner transportation.

The Chief Secretary also cautioned students about excessive screen time and urged them to remain conscious of how digital platforms influence attention, habits and thinking. He encouraged them to think independently, question prevailing assumptions and remain open to new ideas and experiences.

Calling upon young people to look beyond conventional career choices, he encouraged them to explore entrepreneurship, private-sector opportunities, creative fields and emerging professions rather than viewing government employment as the only career option. He stressed the importance of continuous learning and upgrading skills in response to a rapidly changing job market.

Speaking about Ladakh, he encouraged students to explore opportunities both within and outside the UT while contributing to the region's development. He highlighted the potential of entrepreneurship, tourism, winter tourism and creative sectors, and referred to government support through subsidies, loans and other assistance. He also referred to the proposed Startup Policy aimed at creating a supportive ecosystem for young entrepreneurs.

During the interactive session, students raised questions on civil services preparation, career choices, entrepreneurship, tourism, professional skills, forensic science, physics, UPSC preparation and the Chief Secretary's own career journey.

Responding to a question on civil services, the Chief Secretary stressed the importance of developing a regular reading habit, staying updated, using time wisely, maintaining discipline and pursuing sustained hard work. On career opportunities, he advised students to look beyond government jobs, identify their interests, acquire specialised skills and make effective use of digital resources to access opportunities beyond Ladakh.

On entrepreneurship, he explained that the process begins with an idea, followed by the preparation of a project report and an understanding of the different stages involved in establishing an enterprise. He encouraged young people to take calculated risks and explore available institutional support.

Students also asked about his experience of joining Ladakh and his expectations before coming to the region. Sharing his experience, the Chief Secretary spoke about his earlier professional exposure, including his experience in the Northeast, and highlighted Ladakh's unique cultural and social character. A faculty member also referred to his book, Look into a Resurgent Northeast, during the interaction.

The students submitted a memorandum to the Chief Secretary raising issues concerning the student community, including a request related to bridge/road connectivity across the main road near the college. The Chief Secretary took note of the concerns raised.

The interaction provided students with an opportunity for direct engagement with the UT Administration and encouraged them to embrace new skills, independent thinking, innovation and adaptability as they prepare for a rapidly evolving future.

Ladakhi traditional tourist signboards, maps and destination photographs unveiled in Zanskar



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

ZANSKAR: A series of traditional Ladakhi tourist information signboards, tourist maps and destination photographs showcasing the rich cultural heritage, monasteries, adventure destinations, landscapes and wildlife of Zanskar were unveiled on September 25 at the main town of Padum.

The displays were unveiled by Divisional Commissioner, UT Ladakh, Shurbir Singh, IAS, and Director General of Police, UT Ladakh, Anand Jain, IPS, in the presence of Secretary, PWD, UT Ladakh, Baseer Ul Haq Chaudhary, IAS; Deputy Inspector General of Police, UT Ladakh, Altaf Ahmad Khan, IPS; Deputy Commissioner/CEO, LAHDC Kargil, Rakesh Kumar, IAS; Superintendent of Police, Zanskar District, Rigzen Sandup, JKPS; Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Zanskar, Sarwar Shahzad, JKAS, and other district officers.

The Tourist Information Boards and other tourism displays have been installed by the Tourism Department, UT Ladakh, under the directions of Secretary, Tourism & Culture, UT Ladakh, Sanjit Rodrigues, IAS. The initiative aims to provide visitors with authentic, informative and easily accessible information about important tourist destinations in Zanskar.

The displays installed in Padum include tourist maps and photographs highlighting prominent monasteries, adventure sites, scenic landscapes and wildlife destinations. They are intended to

help tourists understand the geography, attractions and cultural significance of various destinations while promoting responsible and informed tourism in the region.

In addition to the displays in the main town, the Tourist Office, Zanskar, has installed traditional Ladakhi tourist information signboards at several important destinations, including Gonbo Rangion, Phukthar Monastery, Zangla Palace, Karsha Monastery, Drang-Drung Glacier and Penzila Pass.

The signboards have been designed to present information in a visually appealing manner while reflecting Ladakh's traditional cultural identity and architectural aesthetics. The initiative aims to enhance the visitor experience and provide tourists with essential information at prominent destinations across Zanskar.

The installation of the tourist information boards is also part of the Tourism Department's efforts to strengthen tourism infrastructure, improve destination interpretation, promote lesser-known attractions and facilitate tourists in exploring Zanskar in a systematic and responsible manner.

The initiative is expected to enhance the visibility of Zanskar's cultural, natural and adventure tourism potential and contribute to promoting the region as a distinctive and sustainable tourism destination in UT Ladakh.



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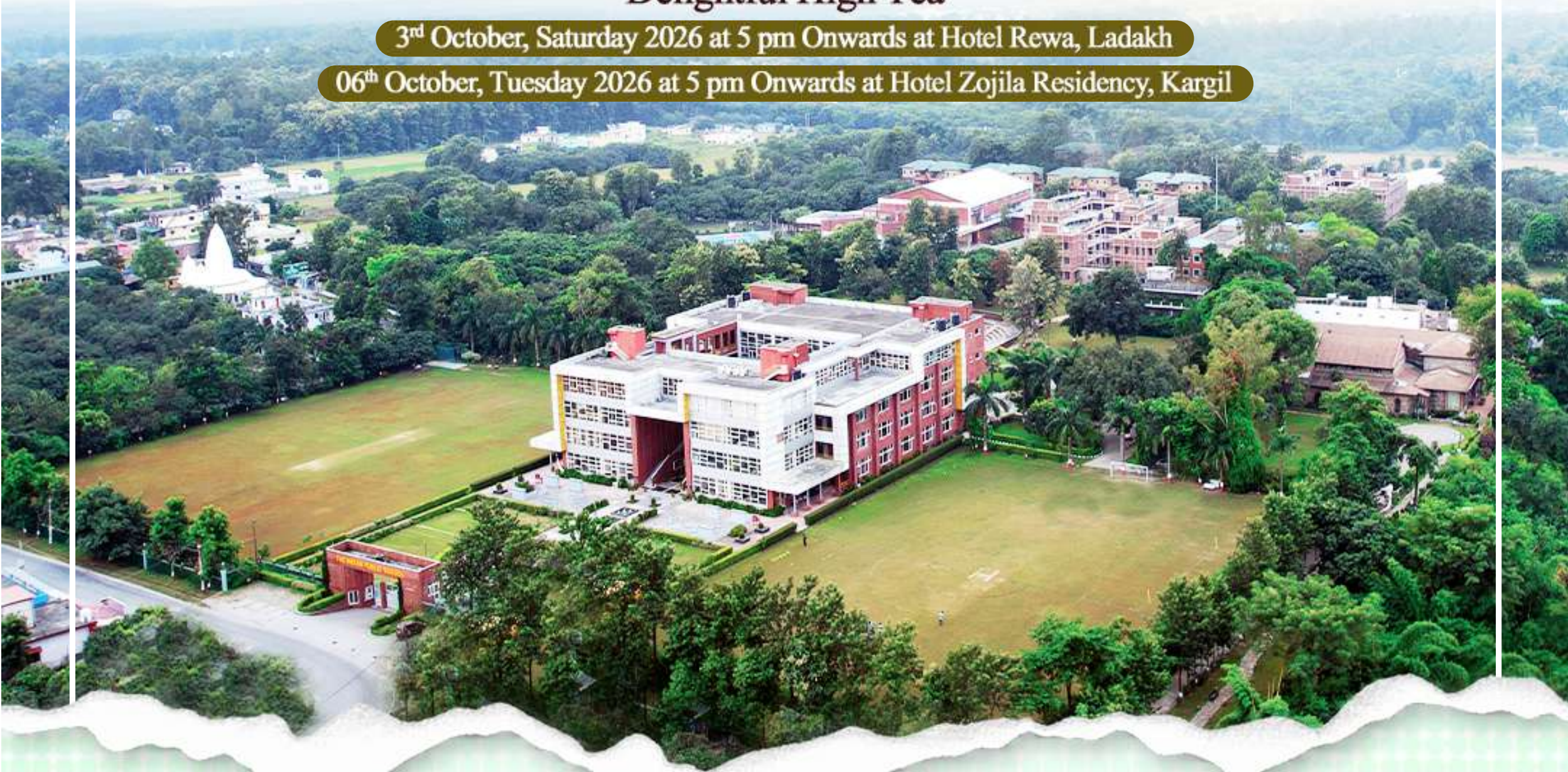
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