

REACH LADAKH BULLETIN



In Conversation with
Rigzin Lachic Wangmo, Entrepreneur

People's Voice:
Debate intensifies: Should Ladakh have a railway line to boost connectivity?

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Interfaith marriage issue rocks Ladakh, sparks outcry

LBA demands anti-conversion law

Stanzin Dasal & Yangchen Dolma
LEH: The issue of interfaith marriages continues to be a sensitive and contentious topic in Ladakh, with recent events reigniting communal tensions in the region. On September 6, the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) organised a protest rally in Leh in response to the conversion and marriage of a Buddhist girl, who wedded Muslim man, in 2011 reportedly. While the marriage itself is a decade-old, the tensions surrounding it are more recent.

The protest saw businesses shutting down as demonstrators voiced their concerns over the alleged forced conversions and called for the implementation of an anti-conversion law in Ladakh.

LBA reiterated a three point agreement signed between the Muslims and Buddhist communities of Leh on November 30, 1992. The agreement's first point states, "The two communities shall deter and discourage inter community marriage, which was found to be the single major factor causing breakdown in Buddhist-Muslim relationship. In consequence, it shall be incumbent on both the communities to restore individuals/ boy or a girl/ to his/ her faith in the event of the inter community marriage entered into. In so doing the willingness or otherwise of the girl or a boy or legality of such action shall not be cited as an excuse

for refusal to respect this agreement by either of the community."

According to the LBA, the Muslim community has failed to uphold this agreement, citing instances of conversion, particularly among women, driven by monetary allurements, misrepresentation, and fraudulent tactics.

Addressing the rally, President, LBA, Thupstan Chhewang stressed the need for an anti conversion law in Ladakh and expressed disappointment in the lack of support from the girl's family.

Anti conversion law are set of judicial rules that prevent or prohibit the conversion from one religion to another. These laws are meant to prevent forced religious conversion of individuals and to prevent religious groups from recruiting members from other religions. The law was enacted by Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Jharkhand.

President, LBA, Women Wing, Yangchen Dolma declared their determination to address the issue, stating, "We won't tolerate this anymore. These people always betray us and act behind our back. We have been tirelessly advocating for an anti-conversion law, but both the previous and current Lieutenant



Buddhist communities of Leh during the protest rally over interfaith marriages.

Governors of Ladakh have ignored us. However, we're still fighting and won't give up."

She urged parents to educate their children about the matter. She emphasized that without action, the problem would persist.

President LBA, Youth wing, Rigzen Dorjey said, "We shouldn't ignore the conversion matters and should investigate them thoroughly. It's discouraging to see that even the girl's family is least bothered and is not in support of getting their girl back. LBA alone cannot effect change without support."

Narrating the whole incident, Rigzen Dorjey said that they reached out President, Anjuman Moin-ul

Islam, Dr. Abdul Qayum to inquire about the marriage and the possibility of getting the girl back.

"Unfortunately, we haven't received any response from their side. We won't sit quietly; we will definitely take action and not ignore this matter", he added.

In response to the allegations, Anjuman Moin ul Islam headed by President Dr. Abdul Qayum convened a press conference at their office on September 7.

Dr. Qayum said, "In recent protests, people were alleging Muslims and Anjuman Moin-ul-Islam for their involvement in forced conversions, but I want to clarify that this is not true. We consistently discouraged

inter faith marriages and have not conspired to change individuals faith. It is not just Buddhists who are getting converted; there are also many Muslims who have converted to Buddhism. We believe that religion is a personal matter and won't force anyone to follow a religion which they don't prefer."

He expressed regret over the use of terms like 'Love Jihad' during protests and emphasised that such accusations should be avoided to maintain peace in Ladakh.

However a video of the girl herself went viral on social media groups claiming that her marriage is voluntary and not coerced. Citing the example of other past interfaith marriages that happened in Ladakh, she accused certain political parties and individuals of politicizing the issue for their vested interest.

Furthermore, Nazir Ahmed, the father of the boy and Vice-President BJP Ladakh unit, was expelled from his position and had his primary membership revoked for his alleged involvement in the elopement of the Buddhist girl with his son.

As tensions persist, Ladakh remains at a crossroads, grappling with the complex issue of interfaith marriages and conversions, as well as the need for dialogue and understanding between its diverse communities.

10th edition of Ladakh Marathon attracts thousands of runners from 27 countries

Stanzin Dasal

LEH: The 10th edition of the Ladakh Marathon, one of the highest and most challenging marathons in the world, saw the participation of around 6,000 runners from 27 different countries. Held from September 7th to 10th in Leh, the event featured six different categories, offering something for runners of all skill levels.

The categories included the Silk Route Ultra (122 km), Khardong la Challenge (72 km), Full Marathon (42 km), Half Marathon (21 km), 11.2 km Run, and Run for Fun (5 km).

At the closing and award ceremony of the marathon, Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd) praised the organizers for their efforts in promoting such events in the region. He highlighted the importance of such events for the local youth, encouraging them to actively participate and contribute to building a healthy society for the development of Ladakh and the nation as a whole. He also urged government officials from various departments to organize similar events in the future and assured support from the UT administration for larger-scale marathons in the coming years.

A total of 312 runners participated in the marathon, with 51 in the Silk Route Ultra Challenge and 261 in the Khardong La Challenge.

The Silk Route Ultra marathon commenced on September 7th from Kyagar village Nubra at 7 pm and concluded at Leh main market on September 8th. In the men's category, the top three winners were Shabir Husain (15:27:53 hrs), Tsewang Kundan (15:53:46 hrs), and Stanzin Phuntsog (15:57:46 hrs). Tsering Yangzom claimed the first position and Shikha Pahwa claimed



Participants during the 10th edition of the Ladakh Marathon.

2nd position in the women's category. The position holders in veteran male category are Maik Becker, Ankush Lokhande and Sunil Kumar.

The Khardong La Challenge started on September 8th at 3 am from Khardong village and ended at Leh main market. The top three winners in the men's category were Rigzin Gyurmeth (06:31:41 hrs), Jigmet Stobdan (6:57:09 hrs), and Tsewang Namgyal (6:57:28 hrs). In the women's category, Namgyal Lhamo secured the first position, Kunzang Lamo and Tenzin Dolma bagged second and third position. In the veteran male category, Kailash Jain, Shivendra Bisht, and Ramanjeet Singh Oberoi were the top runners and in female category, Shamala Manmohan was the scorer.

In the Full Marathon men's category, Nawang Tsering was the winner with a time of 02:42:02, followed by Jigmet Namgail with timing 2:52:58 and Manzoor Hussain with timing 3:20:35. In the women's category, Jigmet Dolma with timing 03:27:53 took the top spot, followed by Disket Dolma with 03:39:35 and Deepika Prakash with timing 04:36:21. In the veteran male category, Shivanand Dangwal and Kazuhiko Nishikawa were the position holders.

The Half Marathon saw

Hans Raj (1: 21:28), Anurag Konkar (1:21:43), and Tsewang Nangdan (1:22:13) claiming the top three positions in the men's category, while Stanzin Chondol (1:29:43), Stanzin Dolkar (1:31:47), and Tashi Ladol (1:35:54) secured the top three spots in the women's category. In the veteran male category, Thomas Philip, Ashok Poojary, and Ashwat Reddy were the position holders, and in the female category, Kiran Chulani, Savita Pethe, and Vidhya Bendale performed well.

The 11.2 km race featured Skarma Idang Lanzes (00:51:41), Padma Lhamo (00:59:39), and Kunzang Chorol (01:00:49) in the top three positions for women and Punchok Namgail (01:00:49), Sonam Chosphail (00:46:54), and Skarma Gyatso (00:46:54) for men. In the veteran categories, Karma Bhutia, Wangyal Phunchok, Mukesh Bhanwala, Jyoti Nene, Kulbir Chahal, and Veena Naik excelled.

CEC, Hill Council, Leh, Tashi Gyalson, commended the organizers and congratulated both winners and participants. He highlighted the administrative support, including prize money, provided by the UT Administration and Hill Council, Leh, and expressed their commitment to continue supporting the Ladakh Marathon in the future.

2nd edition of Himalayan Film Festival announced: September 29-October 3, 2023

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: The Himalayan Film Festival (THFF) is all set to unveil its 2nd edition, once again bringing the magic of Indian cinema beyond the mainstream, to the landscapes of the Himalayas. The festival is scheduled to take place from September 29 to October 3, 2023.

Organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) of the Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh, in collaboration with Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh, THFF is poised to showcase a diverse array of cinema, ranging from mainstream gems to compelling documentaries, and captivating short films.

The festival presents an exciting lineup of events that not only captivate audiences but also engage and empower filmmakers. The festival's offerings include the Screenwriters Lab, Short Film Competition, Photography Workshop, and Masterclasses, curated by esteemed professionals from the Indian film industry, apart from the array of films that the festival will showcase over the five day duration.

Padma Angmo, Commissioner/Secretary, Information, Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh talking about the second edition of The Himalayan Film Festival said, "We received a great response during the first edition of The Himalayan Film Festival in 2021. The primary aim of organizing the festival is to provide a platform to local Ladakhi filmmakers to showcase their films, to encourage local talent, build their capacity, connect them to experts and the market. It is a small community, but one that is very active



and very creative. We hope that they will benefit from the opportunity to network with established filmmakers from other parts of the country. We hope that filmmakers from across the country, and the world, see Ladakh as a filmmaking destination, and utilise local talent in their filmmaking endeavours."

Activities at The Himalayan Film Festival 2023:

Photography Workshop with Achal Mishra:

For amateur photographers from Ladakh keen to hone their skills, The Himalayan Film Festival is hosting an exclusive photography workshop led by renowned photographer and filmmaker, Achal Mishra. Hailing from the city of Darbhanga in Bihar, Achal's debut feature film Gamak Ghar premiered at the Mumbai Film Festival, and was awarded the Manish Acharya Award for New Voices in Indian Cinema. This one-day, hands-on workshop is designed to elevate one's photography skills amidst the breathtaking landscapes of Ladakh. As part of the interactive session, Achal will also display some of his own work to illustrate different aspects of the craft, including the editing and sequencing process. Short Film Competition:

THFF invited filmmakers across the 12 Himalayan States/UTs of India who find

inspiration in the rugged beauty and majestic allure of the mountains to participate in their Short Film Competition. The competition this year is themed 'The Mountains Are Calling,' and offers a stage for budding filmmakers to showcase their craft and learn from some of the best in the industry. A distinguished jury will select the top 15 films for screening. The three best films will receive a generous cash prize at the closing ceremony of the film festival. Film Screenings:

True to its commitment, THFF showcases an exceptional selection of films from across India, with a special emphasis on content from Ladakh in particular and the Himalayan states in general. The festival boasts an exciting film lineup that includes acclaimed titles like 'Haqeeqat' which was filmed in Ladakh, 'Jubilee,' 'Tora's Husband,' 'Spawo (Warrior)', 'Ama (Mother)', 'Jungwa: The Broken Balance', 'Lunana: A Yak In the Classroom,' 'Por Thozhil,' 'Sunpat,' the evergreen 'Lage Raho Munna Bhai' among others, promising a cinematic journey that spans emotions, narratives, and cultures.

The Screenwriters Lab: The Screenwriters Lab, an initiative tailored to empower and amplify the voices of budding Ladakhi filmmakers, is set to provide an immersive experience that nurtures

People's Voice:

Yangchen Dolma

Ever imagined a railway line in Ladakh? On July 26, 2023 Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed Parliament that the survey for a new rail project connecting the Union Territory of Ladakh with the rest of India has been completed. The 498-km proposed line is planned to start from Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh and via Manali will reach Leh. He said that the detailed project report has been prepared and there will be 40 railway stations along the line.

The line will be laid along 2,557.96 hectares of land. Nearly half of the railway line, up to 270 km, will snake through 62 tunnels. It will also entail the construction of 114 major bridges and 90 minor bridges. The hill rail project will also require the laying of 156 km of access roads.

The estimated cost of the project is approximately ₹99,201.40 crore. The new line will start from Beri, passing through the major towns of Sundernagar, Mandi, Manali, Sissi, Darcha Keylong, Sarchu, Pang, Rumtse, Upshi, Kharu and terminate at Leh Terminus.

The government claims that the railway line is the third such proposal to connect strategically important Ladakh with the rest of India and will give all-weather access to the armed forces, boost tourism, bring development in the region, and alternate travelling routes to the people beside road and air. However, the people of Ladakh have some mixed responses regarding the new railway line. Many have opposed the project and find it irrelevant in Ladakh which has a sparse population and is environmentally fragile. Let's read what they have to say about the new railway line?



Ishay Wangmo- Resident of Martselang: A Railway line should not be brought to Ladakh because the population is very sparse and won't be very helpful to the people. Rather it will be more beneficial if we have an adequate bus service that can reach every household.

I don't think the railway is so important and relevant for places like Ladakh. Bringing a railway line to Ladakh would have a significant impact on the environment as it would attract a large number of people from other parts of the country. Though the tourist influx is growing every year in Ladakh only those are coming who can afford it because of the expensive traveling cost. With the opening of the railway, mass tourism will be encouraged which will put pressure on Ladakh's resources. There will be noise pollution along with all other negative impacts. I don't see any advantage of trains for Ladakh. For round-the-year connectivity they are building the Zojila Tunnel, so it will be more appropriate if they first fix the road properly and complete the tunnel at the earliest.

If we continue to use vehicles excessively, it will lead to more melting of glaciers and cause problems. If tomorrow we start breaking mountains to build railway tracks, how many problems will we have to face? It's not just us humans who live in Ladakh, but there are wildlife residing in the region. If we destroy their homes to build railways, where will they go?

The team who are assessing the nowadays is coming to our village Martselang and is not even informing us about their work and project. At least they should inform the villagers. Ladakh could end up in a situation like Joshimath too if we neglect it now and don't act responsibly.



Mutasif Hussain- Resident of Thiksay: In modern times, exaggerated claims fed to us of Ladakh being cut off from the world have impulsively forced us to look for avenues of connectivity with the larger world. On July 26, 2023 Honourable Member of Parliament from Ladakh Jamyang Tsering Namgyal tweeted quoting a reply by Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister of Railways - 'Bilaspur-Manali-Leh railway line project with 40 stations, 62 tunnels, and 116 Bridges at the cost of Rs 99,201.40 Cr' is ready. Thus Ladakh 'hopefully' is prepared to welcome the 'mass' transporter into Ladakh.

Do we really need trains in Ladakh? Images of Former MP Thupstan Chhewang, Former MLC Chering Dorje Lakrook, Former MLA Nawang Rigzen Jora, and Late CEC LAHDC Dr. Sonam Dawa Lonpo appeared on the first page of the 8-page digital magazine detailing the railway project. Therefore, maybe we can trust that the stalwart leaders of Leh have thought through the requirement of Trains in Ladakh.

Why are Trains being introduced in Ladakh especially when Cultural and Environmental degradation is a given? Is it for the people of Ladakh, for the Tourists, strategic or Industrial requirements? Under the present Bureaucratic setup in Ladakh, we can just hope that at the very least the Government has aimed for an integrated approach balancing the needs of the people of Ladakh and strategic necessities. Especially since The Hindu informs us that the other two planned railway lines into Ladakh, the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh (2016-17) and Pathankot-Leh (2017-18), were shelved citing 'low traffic projections' i.e. economic viability was cited as the main reason for its deferment.

The approved railway line is said to be 498 km between Bilaspur (HP) and Leh (UT Ladakh) and of the 40 stations, Sarchu, Pang, Rumtse, Upshi, Kharu, and Leh are mentioned.

The Railway enters Ladakh with the promise of all-weather, faster connectivity. However, the trains being introduced into Ladakh are not your standard trains. The introduction of special pressurized cabins as required in high altitudes forces us to ponder over the economic effectiveness of Train transportation in this region.

The Economic Times reports that Ashwini Vaishnaw clarified that railways will never be privatized however, the same article informs us that the ministry has 'asked to expedite monetization of other assets, including trains, goods sheds, hill rail, stadiums, railway colonies and railway land parcels among others.' The ministry likes to call it liberalization under the 'National Monetization Pipeline.' Whatever the larger economic reasons, it is not just the 'Train' that will enter Ladakh, but also big private players, Railway stations, railway colonies, Railway workers, etc. not forgetting the mass of people and thus new law and order complexities.

Then the question to be asked is merely introducing another form of transport connectivity in Ladakh, will that inherently make it efficient in terms of economic viability for the people of Ladakh? The complaints to check the atrocious airfare between Leh and various destinations charged by the airlines introduced in India as low-cost airlines have without fail fallen upon deaf ears.



Tsetan Chuskit, Resident of Chemdey: Building a railway line in Ladakh might not be the best idea because it could have a significant impact on the beautiful nature and precious wildlife. The increasing traffic and pollution are already becoming a matter of concern for every Ladakhi and with the introduction of train, I feel that it may only aggravate the issues and cause more harm. And let's not forget about the maintenance of the railway line itself! The roads in far-flung villages are not even in good condition but the plan is going on for train.

While there may be some advantages, like faster transportation services, and alternate travelling routes but it's also very crucial to consider the potential negative impacts on the environment. Ultimately, I believe that development should be approached in a way that benefits everyone without causing significant harm.



Padma Dolma- Resident of Martselang: If there is a railway line, it will bring numerous benefits to us. The railway line will enhance connectivity in Ladakh, making travel easier and more convenient. It can contribute to the region's economic growth by facilitating trade and tourism. It can also have strategic significance in terms of defence and security. The construction and operation of the railway line can create job opportunities for locals. It will require supporting infrastructure development, which can further benefit the region. I also want to request the government to start preparing for this and I want to express my gratitude and its definitely something to look forward to.

World Tourism Day



World Tourism Day is observed on September 27 to highlight the significance of tourism as a tool for global development and cultural enlightenment. No doubt countries all over the world whether big or small some or the other way depend upon tourism for its economic survival and highlight their cultural, social, and political values. It is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of tourism and its potential contribution to sustainable development.

A special assembly was held in Mexico City on 27 September, 1970 by the International Union of Official Travel Organisation (IUOTO) and adopted the Statutes of the World Tourism Organisation. Then, UNWTO decided in late September 1979 to institute World Tourism Day.

The first time it was celebrated on 27 September, 1980.

Do you know why 27 September is chosen for World Tourism Day because this date coincided with an important milestone in world tourism i.e. the anniversary of the adoption of the UNWTO Statutes on 27 September, 1970? Also, according to the UNWTO, the date is appropriate for World Tourism Day because it comes at the end of the high tourist season in the northern hemisphere and the start of the tourist season in the southern hemisphere. With a different theme, every year this day is celebrated with full enthusiasm.

This World Tourism Day 2023, the UNWTO,

under the theme "Tourism and green investment" highlights the need for more and better-targeted investments for the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN roadmap for a better world by 2030. Now is the time for new and innovative solutions, not just traditional investments that promote and underpin economic growth and productivity.

World Tourism Day 2023 will be a call to action to the international community, governments, multilateral financial institutions, development partners and private sector investors to unite around a new tourism investment strategy.

Source: Jagran Josh & UNWTO webpage

SoulSpeak

Dr. P.P. Wangchuk

A newer you!



If going out on a trip is a great joy, it is also a great fun to return to one's sweet home. The sense of fulfilment when you go around newer places makes you feel that you are not only yet to learn many things but you also get a new angle of insight into the spiritual and the temporal world.

The fact that getting back gives one as much pleasure and excitement as going out does remind us that there is nothing on this planet that is permanent. You go out for newer experiences and come back fulfilled to ponder on those great moments that moved you a lot and made you think afresh. Your perceptions of people and places change quite a lot, and you become a 'NEWER YOU.'

It is in human nature to find beauty and goodness in everything. That is because things change a lot slowly but steadily but your perception of men and material remain unchanged until you get to welcome the changes. That is why the joy of travelling has been beautifully described by St. Augustine: "The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page"! What a great description, but I would like to put it this way: The world is an unending and expanding book that one can never do a complete reading but can definitely get better and wiser every time one decides to go footloose. Similarly, there is a necessity 'to come back to look back' on those experiences, and be a better person. The world is a great teacher as well and you can make yourself richer in knowledge and wisdom as much as your capacity allows.

Travelling gives you not only 'new eyes' but also a 'new mind' and your sense of exploration widens and you could have a feeling that the world is too big to conquer or too small to give you fulfilment. That depends on your mindset.

Courtesy: WongWorld

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

DID YOU KNOW



• The Amazon is thought to be home to 10% of known species on Earth. And incredibly, a new species of animal or plant is discovered in the Amazon every other day on average.

• More than 400 different indigenous groups live in the Amazon, which is more than anywhere else on earth, and around 300 indigenous languages are spoken throughout the Amazon.

• Shockingly, the first 9 months of 2022 saw the highest recorded deforestation rates in the Brazilian Amazon since 2016. The main causes of deforestation are cattle ranching and agriculture, the building of roads and other infrastructure, illegal logging, mining, and land grabbing and speculation.

• Space junk is any human-made object orbiting Earth that no longer serves a useful purpose. Scientists estimate there are about 500,000 pieces of space junk today, including fragments from rockets and satellites, and everyday items like spanners dropped during construction of the International Space Station!

• You wouldn't be able to walk on Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus or Neptune because they have no solid surface!
• Puffins are known as 'sea parrots' due to their brightly coloured bills and are mainly found on rocky coasts and offshore islands.

• Oak trees may live for 1,000 years, although 600 years is more typical - an oak tree is

classed as ancient once it reaches 400 years old. In the UK, 326 species are completely dependent on oak trees, including 257 species of invertebrates.

• In 2022, woodland covered 32,400 sq km of the UK; or 13% of the UK's land. Ancient woodland covers only 2.5% of the UK. Sadly, up to 70% of ancient woodlands in the UK have already been lost.

• 1,225 of the UK's ancient woods are currently under threat from development, overgrazing, air pollution and the spread of invasive species such as rhododendron. Around half of the UK's remaining ancient woodlands are affected by felling and replanting with non-native conifers.

Fortnightly News

In Conversation with Rigzin Lachic Wangmo, Entrepreneur

Interviewed by Stanzin Dasal

Q. Brief us about yourself.

I was born in Leh but never really got a time to spend my childhood days in Ladakh as my father was serving in the Airforce, and we had to move around with his postings. I spent my school days studying in different parts of India. I pursued IT Engineering in Delhi and worked in Tokyo in a typical corporate setup and later at a startup in Delhi. I spent all my life outside Ladakh and used to visit every year during summer vacations. My grandmother is the one who inspired me and kept me connected to the place. In 2017, I came back to Leh because I always had it in my mind and realized the purpose of going back home. I spent my initial days in Ladakh by traveling and exploring every nook and corner of Ladakh. All those trekking and places, meeting people taught me so much about the place and reconnected me to my roots.

Q. Share the story of your venture, the idea of 'Dolkhar' and 'Tsas by Dolkhar'.

I always wanted to work for Ladakh and its people, but to do social work, you also need capital. Thus, I came up with the idea of a tourism-driven business model by integrating traditional practices. This is how the idea of setting up a boutique property came up, and we restructured the 150-year-old ancestral property into a space that values sustainability and also refreshes my memory of old Leh. I named the property "Dolkhar" after my grandmother, and the front building of the property is the replica of our old ancestral house. When we dismantled the old house, we reused the bricks, wood, stone, and all other materials, resulting in less waste compared to modern buildings. This experience taught me that traditional construction methods are eco-friendly, and I decided to use natural materials as much as possible while constructing Dolkhar.

Dolkhar is made of locally sourced materials using traditional construction techniques. It is rooted in Ladakh's people, culture, and practices. The villas are built with compressed stabilized earth blocks, local wood, traditional columns, and beams that showcase Ladakhi craftsmanship. The whole developmental process aims at creating a zero waste and zero plastic ecosystem.

Tsas by Dolkhar is a vegetarian restaurant associated with Dolkhar. It showcases Ladakh's culinary traditions while incorporating innovative approaches. The recipes are designed to reduce kitchen waste. The inspiration behind opening Tsas was to offer guests a unique dining experience that celebrates Ladakhi culture, local ingredients, and sustainable practices. Tsas supports local farmers and producers by sourcing ingredients directly from them.

Q. You have been supporting local artisans along with promoting Ladakhi culture. Share more about it.



During my initial days in Ladakh when I was exploring the region, I came across many artisans such as straw basket weavers, potters in Likir village, a coppersmith/silversmith from Tsogsti village, a resident of Turtuk village who practices stone carving work, and many more. I felt that all these skills and craftsmanship need to be valued because they might be the last generation of its kind. That's where the idea for 'Hatti,' a shop where these traditional artisans can sell their goods to both locals and tourists, came into being. There is a good response, but due to demand and supply issues, we are facing challenges.

Q. What is your view on sustainable tourism in Ladakh?

When it comes to tourism, achieving 100 percent sustainability may not be possible, but we can strive to balance it out and reduce the impact. Sustainability involves not only environmental aspects but also social and economic impacts. We can contribute by constructing energy-efficient buildings, reducing waste, being mindful of our waste generation, and conserving water. In Dolkhar, we have just 7 energy-efficient rooms with eco-friendly products, and the limited number of rooms is deliberate to reduce the overall environmental impact, save water, and maintain economic viability. The goal is to embrace modernization without losing the essence of traditional knowledge and practices.

Q. You have been honored with the prestigious 'Forward Thinker in Travel' title at the Inspiring Women in Travel-Asia (IWTA) 2023 awards. What do you have to say about it?

I never expected to win this title considering there are so many experienced women who have done incredible work. Winning the title for a project in Ladakh, which is relatively small when compared to others in Asia, overwhelmed me and made me realize that local Ladakhi initiatives can also be valuable. I hope this award helps people recognize the value of traditional knowledge and practices because in Ladakh, we often don't appreciate our own local products and traditions.

Q. How do you see the tourism sector in Ladakh? What are the challenges and actions needed?

I believe there's a need to change the mindset of all stakeholders in the tourism industry. Instead of focusing solely on one's own business and property, we need to step back and think about the whole of Ladakh. Tourists come to Ladakh for its uniqueness, landscapes, natural beauty, rich culture, and tradition, not just to stay in hotels. Therefore, we must preserve these assets to ensure the growth of individual businesses.

Additionally, some tourist destinations in Ladakh are overpromoted, leading to only a few benefiting. There's a need to explore and promote many other destinations so that everyone can benefit.

MESSAGE TO THE READERS

“In a world where self-centeredness is prevalent, we need more empathy and compassion, even in business. An empathetic approach, considering the environment, society, and the economy, can help create a better world. Every individual's small contribution can make a significant difference.”

Fortnight Highlights



Animal Birth Control and Anti-Rabies Vaccination Camp was held at the Block headquarters in Tangse. A total of 182 dogs were sterilized and given anti-rabies vaccines.



A delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile comprising Members of Parliament, Dawa Tsering, Tenpa Yangphel and Yeshe Dolma; President, Local Tibetan Assembly, Dhundup Tsering and Officiating Community Representative Officer (CRO), Karma Sonam met L-G Ladakh at Raj Niwas.



A delegation comprising of Member of Parliament of Central Tibetan Administration expressed gratitude to Hill Council, Leh for the extensive support and dedicated measures undertaken for the welfare of the Tibetan community residing in Ladakh.



A delegation comprising of Member of Parliament of Central Tibetan Administration expressed gratitude to Hill Council, Leh for the extensive support and dedicated measures undertaken for the welfare of the Tibetan community residing in Ladakh.



During the inaugural session of the international conference themed 'Geothermal Ladakh PIVOT 2023 Building Bridges' organised by Mountain Research Institute, University of Ladakh in collaboration with Women in Geothermal (India) and Inner Project Space, USA in Leh.



Joint Secretary (JS) MoRD Smriti Sharan convened a meeting of Ladakh Rural Livelihood Mission (LRLM), operating under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) on September 5.



MC Kargil in coordination with other departments and NYK Kargil, conducted a Swachata Pakhawada cleanliness drive at Api Nallah, Kabadi Nallah, and Adul Gund, Kargil



Chairman/CEC, LAHDC Leh, Tashi Gyalson visited and assessed development projects at various site including Cooperative Super Bazaar, legacy waste clearing site at Bomb Garh Leh and New Transport Stand near Bomb Garh Leh.

Fortnightly News

Sensitisation workshop held on sexual harassment of women at workplace

Reach Ladakh Correspondent
LEH: Sensitisation workshop on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act) for the employees of Deputy Commissioner's office Leh held on September 6.

The workshop was organised by State Hub for Empowerment of Women, under the Department of Social and Tribal Welfare, UT Ladakh to promote safe and inclusive work environment.

District Program Officer, Leh, Sonam Norboo aimed to raise awareness and educate participants about the critical provisions of the Act, which is designed to prevent and address sexual harassment issues in the workplace. Besides, ACR Leh, Shabir Hussain was also present during the workshop.

District Social Welfare Officer, Leh; Nilza Angmo stressed the significance of such initiatives in creating safer work environments. She added that workshops like these play a pivotal role in spreading



Sensitization workshop on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace.

awareness and ensuring that every woman feels secure and respected at her workplace. Further, she informed that the Internal Committee I/C have been formed recently in UT Ladakh.

During the workshop, Gender Specialist, Deachen Angmo provided insights into the Act's nuances, highlighting the responsibilities of employers and employees alike in ensuring a harassment-free workplace. She discussed various aspects of the law, including the definition of sexual harassment, the redressal mechanisms avail-

able to victims, and the procedures for filing complaints.

Similarly, Research & Training Specialist, Tashi Lamo briefed about the various schemes under Mission Shakti, like One Stop Centre, Women Helpline, among others.

In conclusion, participants, including government officials, and members engaged in interactive sessions and case studies to better understand how to identify, prevent, and effectively address instances of workplace sexual harassment.

DC, Kargil, discusses arrangements for Swachhata Pakhwada

Schedule to be observed from September 15 to October 2

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: Deputy Commissioner/CEO, LAHDC, Kargil, Shrikant Balasaheb Suse discussed the arrangements and participation of various departments in the upcoming Swachhata Pakhwada, scheduled to be observed from September 15 to October 2, 2023.

The meeting was attended by DFO Kargil, MC Officer Kargil, CEO Kargil, Executive Engineer, PHE Kargil, Executive Engineer, I&FC Kargil, DPO Kargil, ARTO Kargil, various officers from police and other departments.

At the outset of the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner received updates on various pre-event activities and discussed measures aimed at ensuring the seamless execution of the upcoming event.

During the meeting, DC Shrikant inquired about the plans and activities of each department in relation to Swachhata Pakhwada. He directed the department heads to ensure the cleaning of their respective offices and properties.

He specifically instructed the I&FC Department to undertake the task of cleaning the streams and



Deputy Commissioner, Kargil, Shrikant Balasaheb Suse discussing the arrangements and participation of various departments in the upcoming Swachhata Pakhwada.

Nallahs. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of raising awareness among the public regarding the cleanliness of water bodies.

The DC also directed the PHE Department to focus on cleaning the sources of drinking water and educating the public about their importance. Furthermore, he instructed the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department to actively participate in cleanliness drives across various Blocks and Panchayats.

He instructed the relevant departments to prioritize the cleanliness of government buildings, offices, hospitals, schools, and other public places.

The DC instructed all officers and officials from every department to take responsibility for main-

taining cleanliness not only within their office buildings but also in their premises and the surrounding areas, with the goal of creating a clean and tidy environment.

In addition to the aforementioned directives, the Education Department was instructed to actively engage in the event and organize related activities.

DC Kargil also directed the Tourism Department for the cleaning of tourist destinations, parks, base camps, trekking sites etc.

DC Shrikant also directed the concerned departments to raise awareness among the general public regarding the significance of cleanliness. In conclusion, a pledge was taken to work collectively towards creating a clean and healthy society.

transportation plan during the marathon, management of participants, security, refreshments, medical, water, roles and responsibilities of each department, and law and order situation were also discussed thoroughly.

ADC Wani instructed all departments to make comprehensive arrangements to ensure the successful execution of the marathon. He directed all concerned officers that carelessness of any kind wouldn't be tolerated during the event management and all arrangements should be made in a timely manner.

Chief Controller, Finance, ACR, AD Information, District Youth Services & Sports officer, Kargil, representative nominated by SSP, Kargil, representative of 121 HQ (Army), representative of NHIDCL, Kargil, Founder President, Sarhad, Chief Coordinator, President AKTTA Kargil, District Kargil Olympic Association, President Ladakh Olympic Association, Kargil, beside Sub Committee Members attended the meeting.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

KARGIL: A preparatory meeting for the Kargil International Marathon was convened by ADC, Kargil Ghulam Mohi-ud-in Wani on September 12.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations and discussions were held on the different aspects pertaining to the successful conduct of the marathon. During the meeting, ADC Kargil took a detailed re-

view of the arrangements to be made by the concerned departments.

The departments provided the necessary information to ensure the successful organization of the marathon. ADC emphasized the importance of implementing all required measures to ensure the event's success.

During the meeting, the

Principal Secretary reviews 24x7 water supply status in Leh & Kargil

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Principal Secretary to the Administration, Housing & Urban Development Department, UT Ladakh Sanjeev Khirwar reviewed the status of 24x7 water supply in Leh & Kargil, at the Civil Secretariat, Leh on September 11.

A detailed presentation on the status of the 24x7 water supply in Leh and Kargil by the Tata Consulting Engineers covered various aspects, including the wards, scope of work, GIS Base map, population projection, and water plan of towns, current and further plans for water supply in UT Ladakh.

The 24x7 water supply is a crucial step towards enhancing the water in-

frastructure and ensuring sustainable access to clean water.

Sanjeev Khirwar expressed the significance of the review, stating, "Assessing Ladakh's water supply system is vital to addressing the growing water challenges faced by the region. We are committed to ensuring that Ladakh's residents have access to clean and reliable water sources, and this review is a crucial step towards achieving that goal."

The Administration will work in coordination to create a comprehensive strategy that aims to ensure equitable and reliable access to water for all residents of Ladakh, the Principal Secretary stated.



Principal Secretary to the Administration, Housing & Urban Development Department, UT Ladakh Sanjeev Khirwar.

The review meeting concluded with a commitment to develop a detailed action plan based on the assessment's findings, and a dedicated commitment to undertake responsible actions aimed at addressing diverse facets of water supply plan-

ning, encompassing infrastructure development, conservation initiatives, and fostering community engagement. This plan will guide the implementation of infrastructure improvements, resource management strategies, technology

integration, and community engagement initiatives.

The meeting was attended by the Administrative Secretary, PHE/I&FC; Director of Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD), UT Ladakh; Chief Engineer of Public Health Engineering, UT Ladakh; Executive Engineer of Public Health Engineering, Leh; officers from concerned departments; Project Management Unit (PMU) H&UDD, UT Ladakh; Representative from Tata Consultancy; Representatives from Shah Consultancy, while Deputy Commissioner/CEO of LAHDC, Kargil; Executive Engineer of Public Health Engineering, Kargil; and concerned officers joined the meeting virtually.

DC, Leh, convenes Swachhata Pakhwada meeting



Deputy Commissioner of Leh, Santosh Sukhadeve convening a meeting on 'Swachhata Pakhwada' initiative.

Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: Deputy Commissioner of Leh, Santosh Sukhadeve convened a meeting on September 12 at the DC Conference hall and discussed the upcoming 'Swachhata Pakhwada' initiative.

'Swachhata Pakhwada,' a week-long cleanliness drive, is scheduled to be observed from September 11 to 17 with a multitude of pre-event and main event activities planned. Pre-event activities include 'Swachhata League' between Leh and Kargil, coupled with a thorough

cleanliness drive in the vicinity of Leh Palace and Tsemo. Additionally, a cycling event and cleanliness drive in Trench Ward No. 1 have been organised. A painting competition and mass awareness campaign concerning cleanliness, engaging the participation of Educational Institutions like EJM and Polytechnic, are also set to take place. Plogging activities along the Indus River will mark the celebration of the 9th anniversary of the Swachh Bharat Mission. Furthermore, cooperation

has been sought from SIDCO and the Transport Department for maintaining cleanliness in buses, along with a thematic painting competition. A plantation drive and a program aimed at supporting sanitary workers have been added to the agenda, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to enhancing cleanliness and hygiene in the district. During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner, Leh Santosh Sukhadeve emphasized the importance of civic awareness and the involvement of all stakeholders in preserving the pristine beauty of Ladakh. It was also discussed that the engagement of wholesalers would be sought to ensure a holistic waste management approach. The meeting concluded with all participants taking a Swachhata pledge, reaffirming their commitment to making Leh a cleaner and greener place to live.

Meeting on sewerage treatment plants held in Leh



Reach Ladakh Correspondent

LEH: In a significant sustainable development aimed at addressing vital infrastructure needs, the Principal Secretary of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Sanjeev Khirwar, took charge by convening a high-level meeting at the Civil Secretariat in Leh on September 13.

The meeting focused on the critical subject of Sewerage Treatment Plants (STPs) and their crucial role in improving sanitation and environmental conditions in the region.

At the outset of the meeting, the consultant agency Yash Innovative Solutions left an indelible mark by delivering a comprehensive and detailed presentation on the state-of-the-art sewerage treatment plant in Leh. The meeting, attended by key stakeholders and experts in the field, served as a pivotal moment in shedding light on the groundbreaking advancements in sewerage management.

The Principal Secretary emphasized the UT Ladakh administration's commitment to environmental sustainability, detailing how the treatment plant operates in an eco-friendly

ly manner. He highlighted the plant's increased capacity to handle sewage, demonstrating its ability to accommodate growing urban populations while maintaining high-quality treatment standards.

Sanjeev Khirwar emphasized that sewerage treatment plants should not only treat sewage effectively but also meet stringent environmental standards. He underscored the importance of involving local communities in the planning and execution of sewerage treatment projects.

Discussions and deliberations revolved around the ambitious plans for the expansion and establishment of new Sewerage Treatment Plants in Ladakh. The objective is to meet the growing demands of urbanization while preserving the pristine environment of the region. STPs are expected to significantly enhance sanitation and environmental conditions across the UT.

The meeting was held with the attendance of the Director of the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD), UT Ladakh; key officials and officers from UT Administration, and the consultant agency.

Meeting on Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana proposal held

Directed officers to submit demands of respective departments with approximate cost

Reach Ladakh Correspondent



LEH: Deputy Commissioner, Leh, Santosh Sukhadeve chaired a meeting to deliberate on proposals under the Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY), also known as the District Mineral Funds in the VC room of DC office Leh on September 4.

The meeting aimed to address the pressing needs of different departments and prioritize the allocation of funds from the PMKKKY for projects that would benefit the people of Leh district.

During the meeting, district officers representing various government departments present their

department's requirements and discuss the projects that required financial support under the PMKKKY.

Deputy Commissioner, Leh emphasized the importance of a transparent and efficient allocation of funds under the PMKKKY. He directed all attending officers to promptly submit their department's demands with approximate cost estimation, to facilitate the decision-making process.

In line with the spirit of the Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana, the meeting demonstrated a collective effort to ensure that the benefits of mineral resources directly contribute to the welfare and development of the local communities in Leh.

Additionally, DC Leh added that the proposals will undergo scrutiny and evaluation to determine their feasibility and alignment with the overarching goals of the PMKKKY.

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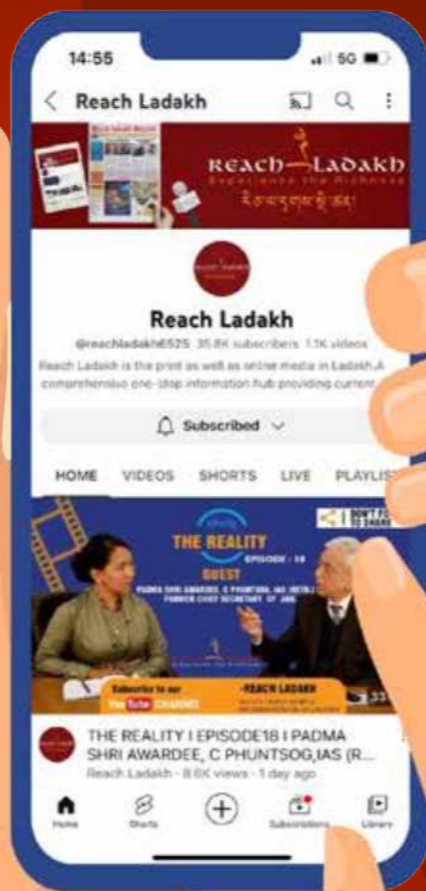
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