

The Earth News

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The management and staff of The Earth News greet all patrons and readers on the auspicious occasion of Lohri



Will ensure India Hockey team's visit to China for Asian Winter Games: LG

Mishra speaks to Sports Min Mandaviya

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd) assured the delegation of Indian men's ice hockey team comprising players from Ladakh that all efforts would be made to send the Indian men's ice hockey team for the Asian Winter Games so that Ladakhi youth would benefit from it.

The LG gave his assurances to the Hockey team after speaking to the Minister of Youth Services and Sports, Government of India, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya and requesting his intervention in sending the Indian men's ice hockey team comprising mostly



players from Ladakh who dabble in the sport at more than 11,000 ft.

The other day, a delegation of Indian men's ice hockey team comprising players from Ladakh led by

Tsewang Gyaltsan called on LG Mishra, at the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat.

Advisor to the LG, Dr Pawan Kotwal, IAS and Secretary, Youth Services

and Sports, Vikram Singh Malik, IAS, were present in the meeting.

Tsewang Gyaltsan apprised the LG of the decision of Ministry of Youth Services and ▶ P11

CEC encourages students to broaden their horizons



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KARGIL: Commending the programs for fostering learning beyond classrooms and encouraging students to broaden their horizons, Chairman, Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC, Kargil, Dr Mohd Jaffer Akhoun the other day

held an interactive session with a group of students who recently participated in Rashtriya Shivir Katha held in Gujarat.

A total of 50 students from Ladakh, including 25 students each from Kargil and Leh, were sent by the Education Department to take part in this prestigious ▶ P11

Delegations meet Mishra

LEH: A delegation of employees affected by SRO-202 called on the Lieutenant Governor, Brigadier (Dr) B D Mishra (Retd), at the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat.

The delegation sought the LG's intervention in releasing arrears of the affected employees.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary, Dr. Pawan Kotwal, IAS; Secretary GAD, Shri Mi-chael D'Souza, IAS and Director Finance, Dr. Safdar Ali, IRS.

The delegates informed the LG that despite being appointed between the years 2015 to 2020, they are receiving lower salary than those appointed post-2019 after the formation of UT Ladakh due to their appointment under SRO-202 by the erstwhile government of Jammu and Kashmir state.

They requested the LG's intervention in releasing their arrears citing the recent ruling of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) branch in favour of Panchayat Accounts Assistant (2019) ▶ P11

Modi to inaugurate Z-Morh Tunnel today: SFs intensify area domination

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The security forces on Sunday intensified sanitization efforts and area domination exercise in Kashmir, a day ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the valley for in-auguration of the strategically important Z-Morh tunnel in Ganderbal district, officials said.

The deployment of security personnel has been increased in the vulnerable areas and dozens of checkpoints have been set up at important intersections in various districts to ensure that anti-national elements are not able to move around freely, they said.

The officials said that random checking and frisking of people and vehicles, including two-wheelers, has been intensified while patrolling is also taking place.

"Security has been tightened near the Z-Morh tunnel. Multi-layered security arrangements have been put in place and the PM's security team, comprising the SPG personnel, has taken over the venue,"



they said.

The prime minister is likely to address a public rally after the inauguration of the tunnel at Ga-gangir, the officials said, adding the venue is now off-limits for the public.

Jammu and Kashmir Police, paramilitary forces and the Army are part of the security apparatus for

Monday's inauguration. Extensive area domination exercises, searches and patrols are being conducted for the smooth conduct of the event, the officials said.

The sharpshooters have been deployed at vulnerable points while aerial and technical surveillance, including through drones, is ▶ P11

Sonamarg will be winter sports destination: Omar

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday said the opening of the Z-Morh tunnel will enable the development of Sonamarg resort in Ganderbal district as a winter sports destination, similar to the famous Gulmarg skiing resort town.

"Tomorrow, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel. This will allow the development of Sonamarg as a winter sports destination," Abdullah told reporters in Gul-marg, 52 kilometers from here.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to inaugurate the 6.5-kilometer Z-Morh tunnel, which will make the Sonamarg town accessible throughout the year.

Abdullah is in Gulmarg to promote winter sports activities in the

scenic north Kashmir town.

"Over the next five years, we will make full efforts to develop Sonamarg as a winter sports destination, just like we have developed Gulmarg," he added.

Abdullah said he had come to Gulmarg to record a program for tourism promotion.

"If more tourists come here, it will mean more earnings for the local people, whether they are ski guides, ski instructors, sled operators, ATV and snowmobile operators, or small businesses like restaurants and dhabas," he said.

The chief minister also said that the Khelo India Winter Games would be held in Gulmarg in February this year, and the union territory is preparing to host the event.

"We still have some time before the Khelo India Winter ▶ P11

People pin their hope

SONAMARG: Residents of Ganderbal district, living on either side of the 6.5 kilometre Z-Morh tunnel on Srinagar-Sonamarg highway, are hopeful that the mega-infrastructure project will boost the local economy and help eradicate unemployment in the area.

"It is a good thing that the Z-Morh tunnel will open soon, immensely benefitting the locals. Sonamarg is breathtaking in winter, but the road closure, prevented visitors. We are grateful to the government for this tunnel," a local shopkeeper, Mohammad Yousuf Shera, said.

Shera believes the year-round connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg ▶ P11

IN SHORT

Pak, China to further deepen ties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have reiterated their commitment to further deepen their "all-weather strategic" partnership, including work on the "high-quality development" of the second phase of the multi-billion dollar China Pakistan Economic Partnership, according to media reports on Saturday.

The development came during ▶ P11

Critical Road projects sans Gol's approval JTN seeks inclusion of ₹3,457 lac Road Projects in PMGSY-III

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, former Member of Parliament from Ladakh, has made an impassioned appeal to Union Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, urging the swift inclusion of critical road projects in the upcoming batch of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-III). The proposed projects aim to address Ladakh's infrastructure needs and en-



hance connectivity in the region.

In a detailed letter, Namgyal highlighted five key road projects spanning

37.260 kilometers, which were proposed during his tenure in the 17th Lok Sabha. These projects, submitted by ▶ P11

PM: Youth power will make India a developed nation

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that the strength of India's youth will make it a developed nation which will be empowered economically, socially and culturally.

Addressing the 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue' here, Modi said some people may find the goal of India becoming developed difficult but it is not impossible. The capabilities of India's young population will power the country's rise to becoming developed, he said.

No power ▶ P11

LEHO founder honoured with Global Alliance Organic Award



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: In a landmark moment for sustainable agriculture, Dr. Mohammed Deen, the visionary founder of the Leh-based NGO Ladakh Environment and Health Organisation (LEHO), was bestowed

with the prestigious Global Alliance Organic Award. This honor recognizes his outstanding contributions to promoting organic farming practices in the challenging terrains of Ladakh.

The award was presented at a ▶ P11

Ladakh banking sector witnesses modest growth amidst challenges

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Ladakh, a region marked by its geographic remoteness and unique socio-economic characteristics, continues to experience significant strides in its banking sector.

Key players such as Jammu and Kashmir Bank (JK Bank), the State Bank of India (SBI), and a mix of public, private, and cooperative banks have played pivotal roles in driving both deposits and credit growth.

However, challenges such as a modest deposit base and high non-performing assets (NPAs) persist, reflecting the complexities of banking in this

arid, high-altitude region.

As of June 30, 2024, Ladakh's banking ecosystem had seen a growth in its deposit base, reaching Rs 9,170.61 crore. While this figure indicates an increase from Rs 8,411.47 crore in June 2023, it also shows a slight decline from Rs 9,193.08 crore recorded in March 2024. Public sector banks accounted for Rs 2,518.98 crore, with private banks like JK Bank contributing Rs 6,287.26 crore. Despite this growth, the region's deposit base remains relatively modest.

On the credit side, Ladakh's banking system saw a notable Rs 500 crore credit uptake over the last year, bringing its

total credit portfolio to Rs 4,403.37 crore by June 2024, up from Rs 3,900.55 crore a year earlier. Advances to priority sectors like agriculture and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have been key drivers of this growth, though challenges persist in several areas. Despite the growth, the Credit Deposit (CD) Ratio improved to 48.02 per cent, up from 45.32 per cent in March 2024, but it still lags behind the national benchmark of 60 per cent.

Disbursement to Priority Sectors Ladakh's banks have made substantial progress in lending to priority sectors, disbursing ▶ P11

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SECTOR 2, CHANNI HIMMAT, JAMMU | NORTH BLOCK, BAHU PLAZA, JAMMU