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THOUGHT of the DAY

"Don't let yesterday take up too much of today."

—Will Rogers

Holy relics of Tathagata Buddha arrive in Leh, amid deep spiritual fervour

LG accords ceremonial welcome; massive community participation marks historic occasion

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Amid deep spiritual fervour and an atmosphere imbued with devotion, the holy Piprahwa relics of Tathagatha Buddha arrived in Leh today, marking the commencement of a historic spiritual celebration in the Union Territory of Ladakh. The Lieutenant Governor of UT Ladakh, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, accorded a warm and reverential welcome to the sacred relics upon their arrival at the Technical Area, Leh Airport, from New Delhi, where the Holy Relics are originally preserved.

Traditional performances, ceremonial honours, and sacred rituals marked the reception ceremony. The relics, brought from Delhi by Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche and Khenpo Thinlas Chosal of Matho Monastery in a special Air Force aircraft, were received by the Lieutenant Governor in the presence of prominent religious and public figures, including Khamtak Rinpoche, Rigyal Rinpoche, President Ladakh Gonpa Association Ven. Dorje Stanzin, President Ladakh Buddhist Association Chering Dorjey Lakruk, former Members of Parliament Thupstan Chewang and Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, former CEC LAHDC Leh Tashi Gyalson, and representatives of various social, religious and political organisations.

The Ladakh Police accorded a ceremonial guard of honour, while monks performed special prayers. The Lieutenant Governor offered khataks and prayers on behalf of the people of Ladakh, invoking peace and well-being for all.

Following the ceremonial reception, the relics were taken in a grand procession to Jivetsal, the designated venue for public exposition, beginning May 1, which marks the 2569th Buddha Purnima. The event witnessed overwhelming community participation from across Ladakh, reflecting unity, faith, and collective reverence, as thousands of devotees, dressed in traditional attire, lined the route up to Jivetsal to catch a glimpse of the sacred relics.

Describing the occasion as highly auspicious, Lieutenant Governor Saxena stated that the arrival of the holy relics has blessed the entire region. He noted that while the relics have been exhibited internationally in the past, this is the first time they have been brought out of their original place of preservation for exposition within India. ▶P11

Five New Districts for Ladakh: Architect of reforms, Pramod Jain calls it a '50-Year Vision'

■ SAKSHI SAWHNEY

LEH: In a landmark administrative overhaul, Ladakh's transition from two to seven districts has been hailed as a transformative step toward decentralized governance, with the New Districts Committee Chairman Pramod Jain, former IAS Officer (chief secretary level) of the then J&K cadre describing it as a "citizen-centric vision that will shape the region for the next 50 years."

In an exclusive interaction, Jain expressed deep satisfaction over the Union government's bold decision to carve out five new districts, stating that the recommendations submitted under his leadership have been "accepted in toto," marking a rare instance of near-complete policy adoption in administrative reforms of this scale.

Jain emphasized that Ladakh's administrative challenges stem from its vast and rugged terrain coupled with a sparse population spread across remote habitations. "For years, two districts—Leh and Kargil—were insufficient to ensure timely delivery of governance and public services, particularly in far-flung and border areas," he said.

The New Districts Committee, constituted in September 2024 by the Ministry of Home Affairs, was tasked with reimagining administrative boundaries to bring governance closer to the people. Despite extreme weather conditions, border problems and logistical constraints, the Committee completed its work in five months, submitting a comprehensive 340-page report plus annexes to the Ladakh Administration in early 2025.

Highlighting the depth of consultation, Jain revealed that the Committee undertook an extensive outreach exercise, travelling over 2,800 km across the Union Territory. It conducted 65 meetings and interacted with 183 delegations representing diverse interests, communities and regions. More than 400 demands—ranging from boundary disputes and administrative access to infrastructure and service - delivery gaps were documented and analyzed. "We followed a bottom-up participatory approach. Every voice was heard, every concern examined objectively—without fear or favour," Jain said.

One of the most intricate tasks before the Panel was determining the district boundaries and headquarters in a region marked by diverse socio-cultural identities and competing regional aspirations. Areas such as Nubra, Zanskar, and Changthang posed unique challenges due to their geographical isolation, ▶P11

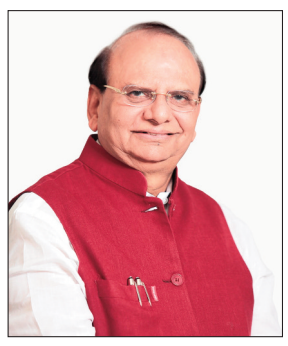
KEY STATEMENTS

- Centre Strengthens Border Governance with Ladakh Reforms
- Every voice was heard, every demand examined
- A reform of this scale needs time
- Women's inputs strongly shaped our report
- Governance Will Now Reach the Doorstep

LG Saxena formally inaugurates five new districts

Directs DCs and SPs to address concerns of public, maintain law & order in new districts

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE



LEH: Just two days after approving the issuance of notification for the creation of five new districts in the Union Territory of Ladakh, the Lieutenant Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, formally inaugurated the new districts—Changthang, Nubra, Zanskar, Sham, and Drass—marking a significant step towards decentralised governance and inclusive development.

Congratulating the people of Ladakh, the Lieutenant Governor said the move fulfils a long-pending demand of local representatives and aligns with the vision of "Governance at Doorsteps" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He termed it a "new beginning" aimed at bringing administration closer to remote communities.

Highlighting Ladakh's vast and challenging terrain, he noted that residents often travel long distances to access basic services, and said the new districts would ensure improved accessibility, faster service delivery, and better administrative outreach.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the newly appointed Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to adopt a people-centric approach, regularly visit villages, organise outreach programmes, and ensure prompt grievance redressal. He also emphasised maintaining law and order to preserve Ladakh's peaceful environment. ▶P11

Exit polls predict BJP win in Assam, edge in Bengal

NEW DELHI: Several exit polls on Wednesday predicted a thumping victory for the BJP in Assam and a clear edge for the party over the ruling TMC in West Bengal, while projecting a return of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu and a comeback by the Congress-led UDF in Kerala after 10 years.

However, some pollsters predicted a big win for the TMC in West Bengal and a hung House in Tamil Nadu with actor-turned politician Vijay's TVK emerging as a spoiler for the DMK. Almost all forecast a return to power for the AINRC-led NDA government in Puducherry.

In West Bengal, while most exit polls predicted a BJP win, two pollsters -- People's Pulse and Janmat polls -- predicted a big win for Mamata Banerjee-led TMC. People's Pulse predicted that the TMC would get 177-187 seats, BJP 95-110, Left Front 0-1 and the ▶P11

LG approves Ladakh Haj Committee

LEH: The Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, has approved the constitution of the Ladakh Union Territory Haj Committee, with the appointment of its chairman and members for a period of three years.

The decision follows the completion of the tenure of the previous UT Haj Committee in 2025. Ghulam Abbas Abidi has been appointed as the Chairman of the UT Ladakh Haj Committee, while the other members include Ashay Mallo, Mohammad Hussain, Sheikh Liaquat Ali, Haji Ghulam Mohammad, Bilal Ahmad, ▶P11

LG flags off fleet of luxury coaches to strengthen public transport in Ladakh

Modern buses to enhance travel experience for locals and tourists in challenging terrains

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: In a significant step towards strengthening public transport and enhancing comfortable travel in the Union Territory of Ladakh, the Lieutenant Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, today flagged off a fleet of luxury coaches from Lok Niwas. On the occasion, he also unveiled the traditional uniform for drivers of the Sindhu Infrastructure Development Corporation (SIDCO).

As part of this initiative, SIDCO has procured 10 luxury 17-seater coaches and 5 luxury 13-seater coaches, aimed at modernising Ladakh's public transport system. These state-of-the-art vehicles are equipped with advanced safety features, including Anti-lock Braking System ▶P11

Dr Jaffer protests exclusion of Sankoo, Shakar Chiktan

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

KARGIL: Registering sharp resentment over the exclusion of Sankoo and Shakar Chiktan Shargole sub-divisions from the newly announced districts in Ladakh, the Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor of LAHDC Kargil, Mohd Jaffer Akhoon, on Wednesday called for an immediate notification granting both regions full district status.

While acknowledging the creation of Drass and Zanskar districts as a step towards administrative decentralisation, Akhoon said the omission of Sankoo and Shakar Chiktan Shargole was "unjustified and deeply concerning", stressing that the issue could not be overlooked given the long-standing demands of the local population.

He underlined that Sankoo, one of the oldest and most populous sub-divisions in Kargil district, ▶P11

AIPEF warns against privatization of power sector

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: The All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) has opposed the proposed joint venture arrangement for the Ladakh Power Development Department (LPDD), raising concerns over tariff increases, governance changes and implications for strategic infrastructure in the region.

In a press statement, the federation, under the leadership of its Chairman Shailendra Dubey, described the proposed model as a move towards privatisation of a public utility and cautioned that it could alter the existing framework of electricity distribution in Ladakh.

AIPEF stated that the joint venture model, which includes provisions such as return on equity and commercialisation of operations, may lead to an increase in electricity tariffs. It said such changes could disproportionately affect low-income households in Ladakh, where affordability remains a concern.

The federation further noted that the existing welfare-oriented approach of the LPDD could be replaced by a profit-driven model, potentially affecting equitable access to electricity. While the continuation of subsidies has been indicated, AIPEF said these remain dependent on future budgetary support, which may expose consumers to policy uncertainty. ▶P11