

FROM PAGE 1

Holy relics ...

Saxena expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for choosing Ladakh for this sacred event and highlighted the region's deep-rooted connection with Buddhism and spirituality. He also urged people to participate in large numbers to seek the blessings of Lord Buddha.

Over the years, the sacred Piprahwa relics of Lord Buddha have been exhibited in several countries, including Thailand, Mongolia, Vietnam, Russia, Singapore, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, drawing global attention and devotion. In Ladakh, the relics will be available for public veneration at Jivetsal from May 2 to May 10, followed by exposition in Zanskar on May 11 and 12, and thereafter at the Dharma Centre in Leh from May 13 to 14, before being flown back to Delhi on May 15.

Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation, Amit Shah, apart from union ministers, Ambassadors, Chief Ministers of Buddhist-majority states, and representatives of various Buddhist organisations, will be visiting Leh for the veneration.

The Piprahwa relics have gained renewed global significance in recent years. After 127 years in colonial possession, a significant collection of associated gems and offerings was repatriated to India in July 2025, from a British family and a private collection.

In anticipation of the influx of devotees and tourists, the Lieutenant Governor has been closely monitoring preparations and has directed extensive beautification and infrastructure measures across Leh. Plantation drives, placement of flower pots, and city-wide cleanliness initiatives have been undertaken in a mission mode to ensure a pleasant, aesthetic, and spiritually enriching experience for all visitors.

Five New ...

safety, geostrategic issues and developmental needs.

The Committee devised a set of objective criteria, including geographical contiguity, accessibility, availability of present infrastructure, water resources, and even environmental factors like daylight patterns, to guide its decisions.

"Populist decisions are easy to make, but objective decisions are essential to ensure fairness and long-term sustainability," Jain remarked, underlining the Committee's evidence-based and bottomup approach.

The creation of new districts is expected to significantly reduce the burden on citizens who currently, at places, travel distances of up to 200 kilometers to access basic administrative services.

"If implemented in letter and spirit, the new framework will ensure faster service delivery, improved governance at doorsteps, employment in new posts to be created, more tourism footfalls, planned urban growth and a tangible enhancement in the quality of life," Jain said. He added that the Report outlines a phased implementation plan covering staffing, basic infrastructure for functional districts, new construction (offices, residential complexes etc.) and stronger institutional mechanisms.

Jain highlighted the critical role played by women during the consultation process. One of the most impactful engagements, he noted, was an all-women interaction.

"They came exceptionally well-prepared. Their inputs on safety, representation, and participation in governance were insightful and have been suitably incorporated into the recommendations," he said, calling it a defining moment in the consultation process.

Beyond administrative efficiency, the restructuring is expected to unlock Ladakh's economic potential. With more job opportunities, improved road connectivity and localized governance, sectors such as tourism, healthcare, skill development and education are likely to witness significant growth.

"Every village in Ladakh holds tourism potential. Better infrastructure and administrative focus will attract investment, create jobs in the private sector also and expand opportunities in education and healthcare," Jain observed.

Addressing our concerns about the time gap

between the report submission in March 2025 and the formal notification in 2026, Jain clarified that such delays are typical for reforms and policy changes of this magnitude.

"Major structural decisions undergo multi-layered scrutiny, especially by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Given the complexity, the timeline is not unusual—rather, it reflects deep, careful and responsible planning," he said.

Concluding with a message to the people, Jain urged residents to embrace the new institutional arrangements with unity, peace and foresight. "This is an opportunity to embrace grassroots and more accessible governance while preserving Ladakh's unique cultural harmony. Development and tradition must go hand in hand," he said.

The creation of five new districts marks a significant milestone in Ladakh's administrative evolution—one that promises not only improved service delivery but also a more inclusive, connected, and forward-looking future for the entire region.

LG Saxena ..

He underlined the importance of addressing key issues such as water scarcity through better utilisation and storage of glacial meltwater to support agriculture and livelihoods.

Expressing confidence in the new administrative units, the Lieutenant Governor said the districts would accelerate development, strengthen governance, and meet the aspirations of the people across Ladakh.

Exit polls ...

Congress 1-3. The Janmat polls forecast 195-205 for the TMC and 80-90 for the BJP plus and 1-3 for the Congress.

Most polls gave the BJP an edge or a victory in West Bengal. Matrize said it is likely to get 146-161 seats, while the TMC would get 125-140 seats. P-Marq predicted 150-175 for the BJP and 118-138 to the TMC.

While Poll Diary forecast 142-171 seats to the BJP, 99-127 to the TMC and 3-5 of the Congress, Praja Poll predicted a big win for the BJP, forecasting 178-208 seats for it. Praja Poll said the TMC would get 85-110 seats. West Bengal has a total of 294 seats with the majority mark being 148.

In Tamil Nadu, two exit polls caught everyone's eye as they predicted a hung House. Axis My India forecast 92-110 seats for the ruling DMK-led alliance, 22-23 for the AIADMK plus and 98-120 for the TVK, which is making its poll debut. Kamakhya Analytics forecast 78-95 seats for the DMK plus, 68-84 for the AIADMK plus and 67-81 for the TVK.

Several polls predicted a big win for the DMK with the People's Pulse predicting 125-145 for the DMK-led alliance, 65-80 for AIADMK-BJP and 18-24 for TVK.

While Matrize forecast that the DMK-Congress would get 122-132, AIADMK plus 87-100 and TVK 10-12, P-Marq predicted 125-145 for DMK plus, 65-85 for the AIADMK and 16-26 for the TVK. JVC is the only pollster that has predicted an AIADMK win, forecasting 128-147 seats for the AIADMK plus. It also forecast 75-95 for the DMK plus and 18-15 for the TVK.

Praja polls predicted 148-168 seats for the DMK plus, 61-81 for the AIADMK and 1-9 for the TVK. Peoples Insight forecast 120-140 seats for the DMK plus, 60-70 for the AIADMK and 30-40 for the TVK. Tamil Nadu has a total of 234 seats with the magic mark being 118.

In Assam, Axis My India predicted a sweep for the BJP, forecasting 88-100 seats for the BJP and its allies and 24-36 seats for the Congress and its partners.

People's Pulse predicted that the NDA would get 68-72 seats in Assam while the Congress plus would secure in the range of 22-26 seats. Matrize said the NDA is likely to get between 85-95 seats and the Congress and its allies 25-32. Pollster JVC projected that the BJP plus would get 88-101 seats and the Congress and its allies 23-33 seats.

While Kamakhya Analytics predicted 85-95 seats for the BJP and its allies and 26-39 seats for the Congress and its allies, People's Insight forecast 88-96 seats for the NDA and 30-34 for the Congress in Assam. Poll Diary gave 86-101 seats to the NDA and 15-26 for the Congress plus. The

Assam assembly has 126 seats with the magic mark being 64.

In Kerala, Axis My India forecast that the UDF would get 78-90 seats, LDF 49-62 and NDA 0-3. People's Pulse predicted that the Congress-led UDF would get 75-85 seats, the LDF 55-65 and the NDA 0-3. Matrize forecast 60-65 seats for the LDF, 70-75 seats for the UDF and 3-5 seats for the NDA.

While Peoples Insight predicted 58-68 seats for the LDF, 66-76 seats for the UDF and 10-14 seats for the NDA, Vote Vibe predicted 58-68 seats for the LDF, 70-80 seats for the UDF and zero for the NDA. Kerala Assembly has a total of 140 seats with the magic mark being 71.

In Puducherry, Axis My India predicted 16-20 seats for the NDA and 6-8 for the DMK-Congress. It said the TVK is likely to get 2-4 seats in the assembly.

While Kamakhya Analytics predicted 17-24 seats for the AINRC plus (NDA), 4-7 for the Congress plus and 1-2 for teh TVK, Peoples Pulse predicted 16-19 seats for the AINRC plus and 10-12 for the Congress plus. Praja Poll forecast 19-25 for the AINRC and 6-10 for the Congress plus. There are 30 elected seats in Puducherry.

Most exit polls have had a chequered history and have been off the mark on several occasions in the past. Some exit polls like Axis My India for West Bengal will be released on Thursday. The counting of votes for all the five assemblies -- West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Assam -- will be taken up on May 4.

LG approves ...

and Zahara Banoo.

"The constitution of the UT Haj Committee reflects our commitment to ensuring that pilgrims from Ladakh receive all necessary support for a smooth, safe, and spiritually fulfilling Haj pilgrimage. I am confident that the newly appointed Chairman and Members will work with dedication and sensitivity to address the needs of the pilgrims and uphold the highest standards of service," said LG, Shri Saxena.

The constitution of the new committee has been finalised after due consultations and representations from relevant stakeholders, ensuring inclusive and effective representation.

The UT Haj Committee will play a crucial role in facilitating Haj pilgrimage for the residents of Ladakh. Its key functions include screening and processing applications, coordinating vaccination and training schedules, organising orientation programmes, acting as a liaison between pilgrims and central authorities, and ensuring welfare, assistance, and logistical support to pilgrims throughout the pilgrimage process.

LG flags ...

(ABS), Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD), improved braking systems, and reinforced body structures, ensuring enhanced passenger safety and reliability.

Lieutenant Governor Saxena said, "The introduction of these modern luxury coaches reflects our commitment to improving public transport in Ladakh while ensuring safety, comfort, and reliability for passengers. Given the unique geographical challenges of the region, it is essential to provide high-quality transport facilities that cater to both locals and tourists. This initiative will not only enhance connectivity but also contribute to the growth of tourism and overall development of Ladakh."

The modern buses have been introduced to provide a smooth, comfortable, and high-quality travel experience for both residents and tourists, particularly for long-distance journeys across Ladakh's rugged and high-altitude terrain.

The addition of this fleet marks a key step towards upgrading transport infrastructure in the region, making travel more efficient, safe, and accessible.

Dr Jaffer ...

possesses the demographic weight, geographical spread and developmental requirements necessary for district recognition. Shakar Chiktan Shargole, he added, stands on similar

footing and merits equal consideration. The absence of both regions from the current notification, he said, has led to widespread discontent among residents.

The CEC further pointed to what he described as an imbalance in the reorganisation exercise. With nearly 80 villages remaining under Kargil district as against around 40 in Leh, he argued that the larger population and terrain of Kargil warranted greater administrative division rather than exclusion. The disparity, he suggested, raises questions about the criteria adopted in the restructuring process.

Akhood also flagged concerns over the allocation of villages to the newly formed districts, stating that the distribution appeared arbitrary and lacked transparency. He urged the authorities to revisit the criteria and ensure that future decisions are guided by fairness, administrative logic and ground realities.

Appealing to the Union leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, the LAHDC Kargil chairman expressed hope that the pending demands of Sankoo and Shakar Chiktan Shargole would receive due attention.

He reiterated that the people of these subdivisions have waited for years for administrative upgradation and asserted that LAHDC Kargil would continue to press for a separate notification to address what he termed a legitimate and long-overdue demand.

The statement adds to the evolving discourse around Ladakh's administrative reorganisation, with calls growing for a more balanced and transparent approach in extending district status across the region.

AIPEF warns ...

Raising concerns over service delivery, the federation said mechanisms such as recovery incentives could lead to stricter disconnection measures, impacting economically weaker sections. It also pointed to the proposed long-term licence period of 25 years, stating that it may limit flexibility in responding to tariff or policy changes.

On strategic considerations, AIPEF highlighted Ladakh's location as a border region adjoining China and Pakistan, arguing that power infrastructure in such areas carries national security implications. It expressed apprehension that involvement of a joint venture entity, including provisions for third-party participation, could dilute direct government control and create vulnerabilities, including in areas such as cyber security and operational coordination.

The federation also flagged structural concerns, stating that although termed a joint venture, the proposed arrangement effectively transfers operational control to a corporate entity while liabilities, including employee-related obligations, remain with the government. It described this as creating an imbalance between risk and control.

AIPEF further stated that the proposed framework may impact employment conditions in the sector, with the possibility of increased contractual hiring affecting job security and institutional capacity. It also noted that reduced reliance on in-house expertise could affect service quality, particularly in Ladakh's terrain and climatic conditions.

On financial aspects, the federation argued that the model does not fully address existing challenges, as it continues to rely on government support while introducing additional financial commitments. It also raised concerns that tariff-linked incentives may encourage cost escalation rather than efficiency.

Suggesting an alternative approach, AIPEF called for strengthening the existing public utility model through capacity building, governance reforms and enhanced central support. It emphasised that the power sector in Ladakh should remain publicly controlled, given the region's geographical and strategic context.

The federation concluded by urging the government to reconsider the proposed arrangement and engage with stakeholders before taking further steps, stating that electricity in Ladakh serves not only as an economic service but also as a critical component of public welfare and infrastructure.