

Ladakh gets first international-level artificial ice hockey rink at Leh

Rs 42-crore facility with 24x7 chilling to enable year-round training; LG Saxena says rink will strengthen Ladakh's position on India's winter sports map

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: In a major boost to winter sports in Ladakh, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday inaugurated the Union Territory's first international-level artificial ice hockey rink at NDS Stadium in Leh, describing the state-of-the-art facility as a landmark investment in the future of Ladakh's young sportspersons.

Built at an estimated cost of Rs 42 crore, the rink is



LG Saxena tries his hand at ice hockey after inaugurating first-ever artificial rink in Leh on Thursday

equipped with a 24x7 chilling facility, allowing ice hockey players to train throughout the year irrespective of natural weather conditions. The facility is expected to address one of the biggest limitations facing ice hockey in Ladakh—the short natural ice season. Until now, players in

Ladakh were largely dependent on the winter months, with only around two to three months available for training and competition. The limited season also placed considerable constraints on organising tournaments and competitions, while leaving little scope for sustained training, skill development and systematic preparation.

The new artificial rink is expected to change this situation substantially by providing players with access to ice throughout the year. With continuous training now possible, Ladakh's ice hockey players will have greater opportunities to improve their skills and prepare more systematically for national and international-level competitions.

In his address, LG Saxena termed the facility a major investment in **P11**

NDA, INDIA Bloc MPs face off outside Parl

NEW DELHI: Ruling NDA and Opposition INDIA bloc MPs came face-to-face near Parliament's Makar Dwar on Thursday — with security personnel forming a cordon between them — as they staged protests and raised counter-slogans over police action on job aspirants in Jharkhand and issues surrounding the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

While NDA MPs demanded answers from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and alleged that he was "running away" from a debate on student protests across the country, INDIA bloc MPs demanded accountability from Union Home Minister Amit Shah over alleged police excesses during the July 20 student protests over paper leaks. **P11**



RuSETUP-2026 brings 'Climate Science' from 'Lab to Field' for rural Ladakh students

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LEH: A two-day training-cum-workshop on climate change, water security and human health has sought to equip rural Ladakh's school students and teachers with scientific knowledge and practical tools to understand and respond to the region's growing environmental challenges.

Titled "Climate Change, Water Security & Human Health in the Cold-Desert Ladakh: A Lab-to-Field Demonstration," RuSETUP-2026 was jointly organised by the G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (NIHE) and the Indian National Young Academy of Science (INYAS) under IN-YAS's flagship Rural Science Education Technology Utility Program (RuSETUP). The programme was held on August 11–12 at the Eliezer Joldan Memorial College (EJM College) Conference Hall in Leh and also conducted online.

The workshop brought together 29 students and

Workshop was jointly organised by G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (NIHE) and Indian National Young Academy of Science (INYAS) under Rural Science Education Technology Utility Program

teachers from government schools, including designated PM Shri schools, across rural Ladakh, exposing them to the impacts of climate change on snow, glaciers, water resources, ecosystems and human health through expert lectures, demonstrations and field-based learning.

The programme was chaired by Eshay Tundup,

Executive Director, Ladakh Ecological Development and Environmental Group. Sonam Lotus, Scientist and Head, Met Centre Leh, India Meteorological Department, attended as Guest of Honour, while Prof. Stanzin Yangdol, Principal, EJM College, Leh, was the Special Guest.

The programme began with a formal welcome and introduction to the Institute by Dr. Sandipan Mukherjee, Scientist and Head, Ladakh Regional Centre (LRC), NIHE, followed by ceremonial lamp lighting. Dr. Purushottam K. Garg, Scientist, LRC-NIHE, briefed participants on the background, objectives and schedule of the workshop.

In his inaugural remarks, Dr. I.D. Bhatt, Director-In-Charge, G.B. Pant NIHE, welcomed the participants and underlined the urgent need to promote environmental sustainability through inclusive, focused and science-based initiatives.

The first technical session featured two keynote lectures **P11**

VBL backs 7 LAHDCs, seeks people's mandate and wider development measures for Ladakh

VBL submits memorandum to LG, seeks democratic consensus on councils, anti-conversion law, separate butcher markets, cultivation of barren land and revival of traditional water systems

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Skarma Namtak, VBL Convenor

LEH: The Voice of Buddhist Ladakh (VBL) has welcomed the Central Government and UT Ladakh Administration's decision to establish Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) in all seven districts of the Union Territory, while urging that the councils be created strictly

in accordance with the democratic aspirations and wishes of the people concerned.

In a memorandum submitted to Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, VBL Convenor Skarma Namtak expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Ladakh LG Saxena and Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra for what the organisation described as a landmark step towards strengthening democratic decentralisation and grassroots governance in Ladakh.

VBL said the establishment of LAHDCs in all seven districts could promote balanced regional development, strengthen local self-governance and ensure equitable representation for every district. It also acknowledged the role of Ladakh leaders, including Kaga Thupstan Chhe-wang, Advocate Tashi Gyalson, Jamyang Tsering Namgyal and Tashi Kachhu, in consistently pursuing the demand over the years.

However, the organisation has stressed that the formation of the councils should be based on the democratic will of the people. Referring to differences **P11**

Red Fort blast carried out by Al-Qaida offshoot: UN report

NEW DELHI: The November 2025 terror attack near Delhi's Red Fort was carried out by Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), according to a latest report of the United Nations Security Council.

The finding provides a clear international attribution of the deadly attack to the Al-Qaida offshoot and underscores the emergence of a more decentralised terror architecture in the region.

The report, submitted pursuant to UNSC Resolution 2734 (2024) on ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, says AQIS has continued to evolve from a fragmented outfit into a regional terrorist entity. Rather than operating through large formations, the group has developed logistics and financial networks built

around small, scattered and decentralised cells.

"The attack in November 2025 on the Red Fort in Delhi was officially attributed to AQIS," the report says. The assessment assumes significance nearly nine months after the blast, which plunged the national capital into panic and triggered a major security response. **P11**

LG Saxena to inaugurate 'Ladakh Book Festival 2026'; 9-day literary extravaganza begins today

75-plus book stalls, literature festival, children's programmes, cultural performances and 'Know Your Army' exhibition lined up

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Yuvraj Malik, Director of National Book Trust, addresses press conference in Leh on Thursday

LEH: The second edition of the Ladakh Book Festival 2026 is set to begin on August 14 at the NDS Memorial

Sports Complex, Leh, bringing together books, literature, creativity, culture and learning in a nine-day celebration aimed at strengthening the reading culture across Ladakh.

Addressing a press conference ahead of the festival, Director, National Book Trust, India, Yuvraj Malik informed that nine-day festival, being held from August 14 to 22, would be inaugurated tomorrow by Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena. "The inauguration will be attended by Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh, Ashish Kundra; Lieutenant General Madanraj Pandey, GOC 14 Corps; and Major General Sachin Mehta, GOC 3 Infantry Division, as distinguished guests. Administrative Secretary, Industries and Commerce, Himanshu Gupta; Secretary to **P11**

75ltrsofilliclit liquor seized in Skara

LEH: In a major action against the illegal liquor trade, Leh Police seized 75 litres of illicit locally made liquor during a search operation at Skara in Leh. Following the recovery, police registered FIR No. 174/2026 under Section 48 of the Excise Act. Further investigation into the case is underway to trace the source and establish the wider network involved in the illegal trade. The seizure comes as part of intensified efforts by Leh Police to curb the circulation of illicit liquor and strengthen enforcement of excise laws across the district.

'India, US fully committed to trade agreement despite 100% tariff bill'

NEW DELHI: India and the US continue to be committed to advancing their trade agreement despite a US bill that permits tariffs of up to 100 per cent on the top five buyers of Russian goods passing via the US legislative process, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Thursday.

This is part of the ongoing US legislative process. We shouldn't comment on that, in my opinion. When questioned about the bill and its possible effects on India, Agrawal responded, "That's their internal process."

We regularly communicate with the US side on trade agreements. Additionally, both parties are dedicated to the agreement that we have

reached, he said, adding that both parties are fully committed to proceeding in that manner.

Agrawal's remarks coincide with the US Senate passing a sanctions package against Russia that would allow the US President impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on the top five importers of Russian gas and oil. However, the US House of Representatives must yet review the proposal before it can proceed.

The US and India have been negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) that would benefit both countries. US Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal discussed important aspects of the deal,

such as improved market access, digital trade, supply chain resilience, lowering non-tariff barriers, and collaboration in key areas, during his June 22-24 visit to New Delhi.

Both the countries acknowledged significant advancements made by their negotiating teams and reiterated their commitment to a fair, commercially significant agreement that offers real advantages to companies, farmers, labourers, and consumers in both nations.

India and the US reaffirmed their commitment to more extensive BTA negotiations in February while announcing a framework for an interim deal on reciprocal and mutually beneficial **P11**

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