

Apex-KDA announces Sep 19-24 padyatra after MHA talks fail to make progress

NEW DELHI: The Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) on Thursday announced a September 19-24 padyatra in Ladakh after their talks with the Union Home Ministry 'failed' to make progress, with LAB chairman Chering Dorje Lakruk expressing anguish over the "differential treatment" meted out to protesters in Ladakh compared with those in Delhi.

The delegation met the Home Ministry on Wednesday, its first meeting with officials in about four months, expecting discussions on a draft for a "tailor-made" governance structure for Ladakh.

Climate activist and Leh Apex Body (LAB) member Sonam Wangchuk said the talks were "cordial", but the government had not responded to the list of non-negotiables submitted by the groups, including a governance arrangement in which an elected assembly would be



above the bureaucracy and have control over law and order.

"We expected a unique, tailor-made governance model. We had given them the details and drafts, but this meeting was a repeat of the last meeting," Wangchuk said. The delegation said they postponed a planned march on September 10 to hold talks with the MHA. Wangchuk shared that they would now

wait for about a week for an assurance before deciding on a larger agitation.

Ladakh MP Mohammad Haneefa, while reiterating that the delegation expected the government to provide a draft that could be discussed, also flagged a disconnect between the MHA and the UT administration, saying the latter appeared to be taking major decisions even as the Home Ministry was engaging with

the LAB and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA).

"While the MHA is showing sincerity, the UT administration seems to be going in another direction. Major decisions are being taken," Haneefa said. He said the chief secretary's press conference in Leh after the meeting further added to the impression that the administration was moving in a different direction.

Lakruk focused on what he saw as a stark difference in the treatment of protesters in Ladakh and Delhi. "We condemn the excesses against students on July 20. But compare that with Ladakh, we feel there is a huge difference," he said.

Lakruk alleged that an AK-47 was fired during the September 24 violence despite protesters being unarmed and questioned why the incident had not generated the same level of concern. "We are tribals, so our lives are cheap?" he questioned.

He also ►P11

30+ Satellites, 34 Nations: Modi Hails ISRO at International Space Summit

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday hailed the Indian space sector and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), calling for global cooperation and sustainability at the International Space Summit in Paris.

Addressing the summit virtually, PM Modi highlighted the message of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, calling for cooperation in exploration, innovation, and protecting space. Hailing global trust in ISRO, he noted that more than 430 satellites from 34 countries have travelled to space aboard Indian rockets.

The Prime Minister said, "For centuries, space has inspired our imagination. Today, it shifts life on Earth. From climate and crops to oceans and communities. The promise of space is infinite. Our responsibility is collective. As orbits become more crowded, tech more powerful and actors more numerous, our choices must be



clear: cooperation over confrontation, sustainability over short-term gain, inclusion over exclusion. India's approach is rooted in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, that is, one Earth, one family, one future. The spirit must now travel beyond Earth."

He noted that India supports safe and sustainable development in the space sector, anchored in dialogue and multilateral cooperation.

"We support a safe, secure, peaceful and sustainable space domain anchored in international law, dialogue and multilateral cooperation. Scientific data must serve the common good

with openness and integrity. India's space journey reflects this philosophy; ISRO, which stands at the heart of this journey, has earned global admiration for its excellence and cost-effective missions.

Its capabilities serve farmers and fishermen, weather forecasting, disaster management, and navigation. More than 430 satellites from 34 countries have travelled to space aboard Indian rockets. ISRO's technology and partnership serve not only India but the wider world. Behind this global trust, there is dedication and hard work of generations of Indian scientists, engineers and technicians," he said.

Lauding the Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya L1 missions, he reiterated that India aims to establish an Indian space station by 2035 and send a person to the Moon by 2040.

"Chandrayaan-3 made India the first nation to land near the lunar south pole. Aditya-L1 is ►P11

Nepal floods: Toll climbs to 1,377; 5,000 missing

KATHMANDU: The death toll due to the flash floods in Nepal rose to 1,377 on Thursday as more bodies were recovered from the affected districts, while rescue and search operations continue for more than 5,000 missing people, authorities said.

At least 364 bodies have been recovered from Chitwan district, 228 from Nawalparasi East, 222 from Nawalparasi West and 198 from Nuwakot, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA).

Similarly, 178 bodies have been recovered from Rasuwa, 77 from Gorkha, 70 from Dhading and 38 from Tanahu, it said. Two flood victims died during treatment in Kathmandu.

The joint command of security personnel has continued search and rescue operations for the missing people, estimated to be 5,130. So far, 13,656 people have ►P11

Bank strike today as unions demand 5-day work week

NEW DELHI: Banking services, including cash withdrawals and deposits at public sector banks, are likely to be affected on Friday as bank employees' and officers' unions observe a nationwide strike demanding a five-day working week and resolution of other long-pending issues.

The September 11 bank strike could impact banking operations for four days in several parts of the country, with Saturday and Sunday being bank holidays. In some states, the disruption could extend further as September 14 is a holiday on account of Ganesh Chaturthi. Most public sector banks have already alerted customers about the possible impact of the strike on branch operations and

services.

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of seven bank employees' and officers' unions, has also threatened a three-day nationwide strike from September 28, coinciding with the half-yearly closure.

The demand for a five-day banking week has remained unresolved for a long time. Even during conciliation meetings before the Chief Labour Commissioner, the government did not give any commitment on its implementation.

"Hence, the agitation has been forced on the unions due to the actions of the government and management," said Rupam Roy, general secretary of the All India Bank ►P11

Article 371 talks advance, direct election proposed for Ladakh UT body: CS Kundra

MHA seeks clarity on powers of proposed body and LAHDCs; October meeting to take process towards draft; Kundra urges leaders to project positivity

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Chief Secretary Ladakh Ashish Kundra on Thursday said the September 9 meeting between Ladakh leaders and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) marked a further step in the ongoing



dialogue on constitutional safeguards, with consensus emerging on the constitution of a UT-level body under Article 371 through direct elections from constituencies.

Briefing the media on the outcome of the meeting, in which representatives of the

Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) participated, Kundra said the discussion on the proposed UT-level body was taken forward in continuation of the decision reached at the July 3 meeting.

He said the participants

were specifically asked to deliberate on whether the proposed body should be constituted through direct elections from constituencies or indirect elections through the LAHDCs. The representatives of the Apex Body and KDA were unanimous that the UT-level body should be directly elected through constituencies, and agreement was reached on the issue.

Kundra said the broader objective of the ongoing democratic dialogue was to secure protection for Ladakh's land, culture, heritage, mineral resources, environment and employment.

He noted that employment protection had ►P11

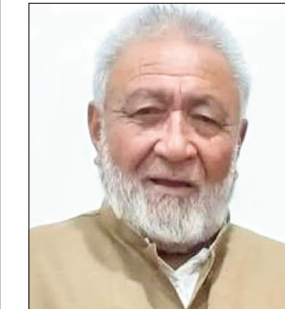
Prince Rahim Aga Khan V meets PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Prince Rahim Aga Khan V, 50th Imam of the Ismaili Muslims, on Thursday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the two held discussions on India's partnership with the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in agriculture and rural development, among other areas.

Prince Rahim Aga Khan V is visiting India from September 9 to 15 following an invitation from Vice President C P Radhakrishnan.

"Happy to meet His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V. Fondly ►P11

Haji Mohd Hassan Commander, first MP from Kargil, dies at Pashkum



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

KARGIL: Veteran political leader and former Member of Parliament Haji Mohammad Hassan Commander, who had the distinction of being the first elected MP from Kargil, died on

Wednesday at his ancestral village of Pashkum in Kargil. He was a prominent figure in the region's political and public life for several decades.

His death has triggered an outpouring of condolences across Ladakh, particularly in Kargil, with political leaders, religious bodies and social organisations remembering him for his long public service and contribution to the region.

Haji Mohammad Hassan Commander was a pioneer of the Congress in Kargil and remained closely associated with the party's political activities throughout his career. ►P11

No sports background, didn't run 100m before 2017: Sufiya eyes 122 km Ladakh Ultra Defence

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Long-distance runner Sufiya Sufi is brimming with confidence as she prepares to defend her Ladakh Silk Route Ultra Marathon title, with her sights set on winning this year's race in record time.

A five-time Guinness World Records holder in long-distance running, Sufi is upbeat about her chances and says her familiarity with Ladakh gives her added confidence ahead of the race.

Her Guinness records include an ultra run from Kashmir to Kanyakumari in 2019, the 6,000-km Golden Quadrilateral challenge in 2020, three runs from Manali to Leh, a run across Qatar



and, most recently, a 5,000-km run from Kanyakumari to the Karakoram Pass.

"Ladakh is very close to my heart because it's been more than five years I'm coming to Ladakh, doing my own running challenges and it's been three years I'm doing

Silk Route Ultra and last year I was a winner. I am very optimistic and eager to defend my title. This time I will go with a record timing," Sufi told here on Thursday.

Sufi said she decided to participate despite being advised against taking on ultra-long distances so frequently.

"I recently did 5000 Kms from Kanyakumari to Karakoram Pass and after that I was advised that I shouldn't run so much. But Ladakh is very close to my heart so I do not want to miss this chance. And it will be my third time at SRU and I'm so much excited. It's like festival for me. And the vibes this marathon gives you, it means a lot," she said. ►P11

Scientists flag alarming changes in Ladakh Himalaya, seek stronger research-based conservation measures

7TH HIMALAYAN POPULAR LECTURE HELD BY LADAKH REGIONAL CENTRE OF G.B. PANT NIHE HIGHLIGHTS GROWING THREATS TO GLACIERS, WATER RESOURCES AND FRAGILE HIGH-ALTITUDE ECOSYSTEMS

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: The fragile Himalayan ecosystem of Ladakh is facing mounting challenges from climate change, declining snowfall, natural hazards and invasive species, experts cautioned at the Annual Day 2026 celebration of the

Ladakh Regional Centre (LRC) of the G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (NIHE) here on Thursday.

The event, which also featured the 7th Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant Popular Lecture, brought together scientists, academicians, govern-



ment officials and students for discussions on the rapidly changing Himalayan environment and the need for stronger scientific interventions to safeguard the region's ecological security.

The programme began with ceremonial lamp lighting, followed by a welcome address and an institutional progress briefing by Dr. Sandipan Mukherjee, Regional Head, NIHE-LRC. Dr. P.K. Garg introduced the keynote speaker.

Delivering the keynote popular lecture, Prof. Gh. Jeelani, Professor ►P11

Goyal pushes India-Russia trade ties, targets USD 100 bn by 2030

NEW DELHI: Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday called for an accelerated India-Russia economic and industrial partnership, urging businesses from both countries to work towards achieving the target of USD 100 billion in bilateral trade and USD 50 billion in two-way investment by 2030.

Addressing the INNOPROM India 2026 Co-Chair Plenary Session with Russian Minister of Industry and Trade Anton Alikhanov in New Delhi, Goyal said the targets set by the two Heads of State would serve as a measure of the performance of both governments and

businesses.

Goyal said raising bilateral trade from the current level of around USD 60 billion to USD 100 billion would require an additional USD 40 billion over the next four years, translating into sustained double-digit year-on-year growth.

He stressed that achieving the target would require significant efforts not only from the two governments but also from businesses on both sides.

Highlighting the scope for diversifying bilateral trade, Goyal pointed to strong growth in several Indian export categories.

Indian exports ►P11