

Ladakh emerging as a responsible, sustainable global Tourism Destination: LG Kavinder

Unveils logo of Destination Ladakh, 'Celebrate Ladakh' calendar & STP Incentive Scheme

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

LEH: The Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta, on Thursday said that Ladakh is steadily emerging as a memorable, responsible and sustainable global tourism destination, with growth firmly rooted in cultural preservation, community participation and environmental responsibility.

He emphasized that Ladakh's unique heritage, pristine natural landscape and resilient communities form the core of its global identity, and the UT Administration is committed to promoting tourism that is inclusive, balanced and respectful of local traditions and ecology. The Lt Governor was speaking at a programme organised by the Department of Tourism for the unveiling of the Destination Ladakh logo. He said the new tourism identity reflects Ladakh's distinctive character and long-term vision for responsible



LG Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta unveiling logo of Destination Ladakh.

tourism.

"This initiative marks an important step towards strengthening Ladakh's presence on the national and international tourism map while ensuring sustainable livelihoods and lasting benefits for local communities," he stated. Kavinder Gupta remarked that Destination Ladakh is not merely the unveiling of a logo, but an opportunity to present Ladakh's culture, heritage and stories of resilience to the

world. He noted that the design, colours and form of the logo strike a balance between tradition and subtle modernity, symbolising Ladakh's warmth, resilience and understated dignity. He added that the initiative will promote balanced, year-round tourism and generate employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women.

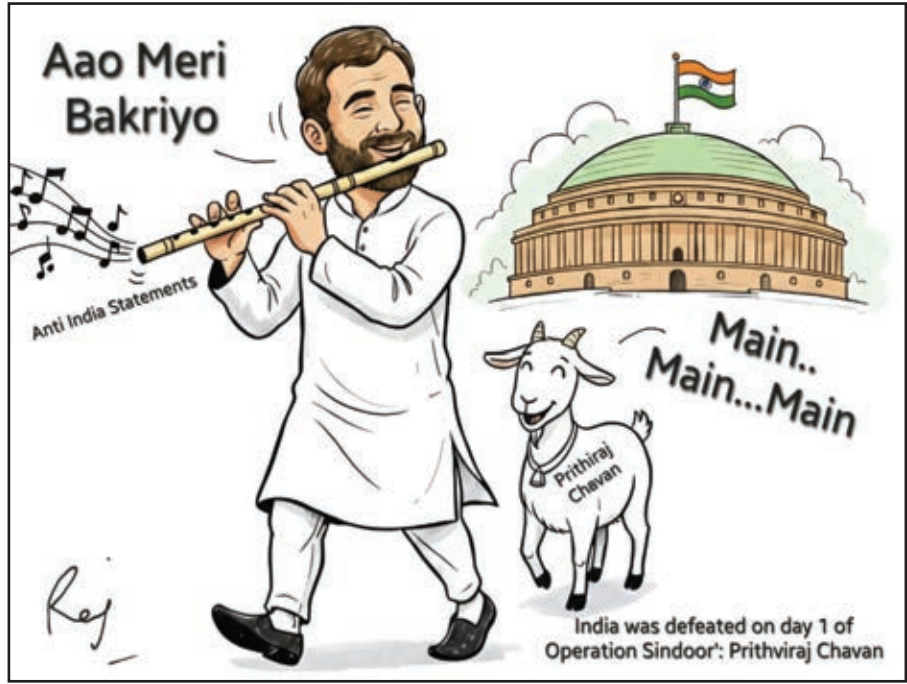
Highlighting the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Lt Governor said the focus has consistently been

on bringing remote and strategically important regions like Ladakh into the mainstream of development. Guided by this vision, the UT Administration is advancing innovation, sustainability and cultural preservation, positioning Ladakh as a responsible and globally relevant destination.

He informed that several major tourism projects are being implemented with support from the Ministry of Tourism, including Swadesh Darshan 2.0 projects such as Julley Leh Biodiversity Park (Rs 23.16 crore) and the LoC & Hunderman Village Experience in Kargil (Rs 11.45 crore). Other initiatives include development of Mushkoo Valley (Rs 9.77 crore), homestays in tribal clusters under PM-JUGA (Rs 4.59 crore), and upcoming Sound & Light and Water Screen Projection shows in Leh and Kargil, expected to be commissioned in 2026.

During the event, the Lt Governor also released the

Celebrate Ladakh festival calendar, the STP Incentive Scheme for environmental protection, and Satellite Phone Procurement SOPs for emergency use by tour operators. Chairman/CEC LAHDC Kargil, Dr Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, highlighted tourism potential in Kargil, especially Suru Valley, while senior officials outlined policy initiatives and future plans. The logo, created by Team Stringmo and inspired by the Bhoti letter "La," was formally launched as Ladakh's new tourism identity.



IIM Jammu hosts Member NITI Aayog for keynote address on Nation Building and Viksit Bharat 2047

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu had the honour of hosting Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, who delivered a keynote address on the eve of the Strategic Management Forum (SMF) 2025, marking a significant milestone in the Institute's journey of academic excellence and national engagement.

Dr. Vinod K. Paul was received by Prof. B. S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu. During his visit, he viewed the Basohli Painting Exhibition showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir, planted a Rudraksh sapling symbolising sustainability, and toured key campus facilities including the Nalanda Library and Smart Classrooms. The visit reflected IIM Jammu's commitment to blending cultural roots with modern academic infrastructure.

Welcoming the distinguished guest, Prof. Sahay described the interaction as a privilege and highlighted Dr. Paul's stature as an eminent physician and visionary policymaker. He underlined IIM Jammu's strate-



Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog with IIM Jammu faculty at a programme.

gic collaborations with AIIMS Jammu and IIT Jammu, including the MBA in Healthcare Management programme, and noted growing interest from global institutions in these initiatives.

In his keynote address, Dr. Vinod K. Paul commended the founding leadership of IIM Jammu for building an institution rooted in national service and excellence. Calling IIM Jammu "a crown in the jewel," he emphasized the decisive role of founding leadership in shaping institutional culture and long-term excellence. He urged students and faculty to push intellectual and innovative frontiers while maintaining uncompromising standards.

Elaborating on the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, Dr. Paul stressed the need for holistic national development encompassing education, healthcare, equity, ethical governance, and innovation. He outlined key healthcare priorities including strengthening primary healthcare, reducing preventable mortality, expanding Ayushman Bharat, leveraging digital health and telemedicine, and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure. He also highlighted India's aspirations to improve life expectancy and healthy life years, along with opportunities in AYUSH, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and biosciences.

Dr. Paul emphasized the transformative role of artificial intelligence and digital

technologies in healthcare and education, the importance of professional health management, and the need to address challenges of an ageing population through focused elderly care and the silver economy.

Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean Faculty and Research, highlighted IIM Jammu's engagement in startup incubation, PPP initiatives, and collaboration with the Ministry of Skill Development. Day 2 of SMF 2025 featured high-impact technical sessions on ethical AI, sustainability, entrepreneurship, public policy, and decentralized governance, reinforcing IIM Jammu's commitment to nation building and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

JMC Com inspects green strip, canal walkway at Bagad Mandi, Channi Himmat

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), Dr. Devansh Yadav on Thursday inspected the newly developed green strip and walkway constructed along the canal at Bagad Mandi, Channi Himmat.

The project has been executed under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and as part of JMC's ongoing efforts to create green spaces across Jammu city and enhance environmental quality.

The stretch of the canal was earlier being used for open dumping of garbage, resulting in unhygienic conditions and environmental pollution in the surrounding area.



JMC Commissioner, Dr. Devansh Yadav inspecting newly developed green strip and walkway at Bagad Mandi.

After the removal of the garbage dump, the Jammu Municipal Corporation has successfully transformed the site by developing a green strip and constructing a pedestrian-friendly walkway along the canal.

The initiative has not only improved the aesthetic appeal of the area but has also pro-

vided a clean and pleasant space for residents to take morning and evening walks.

To further beautify the location and promote civic sense, murals conveying messages on cleanliness, environmental protection and responsible civic behaviour have been painted on the adjoining wall.

During the inspection, the Commissioner interacted with locals and emphasized that sustained cleanliness can only be achieved through active public participation. He urged locals and shopkeepers living near the canal to refrain from dumping garbage into the water body and to cooperate with the Municipal Corporation in keeping water sources clean and pollution-free.

Joint Commissioner Health and Sanitation, Abdul Sattar, Joint Commissioner (W), Firdous Ahmed Qazi, Executive Engineer Division-5, Yasir Bashir Kichloo, Executive Engineer (Electrical), Simarpal Singh, IEC In-charge, Dr. Divya Sharma, other concerned officials and locals were present on the occasion.

Div Com directs completing Bhagawati Nagar flyover; opening both tubes of Gandharwan tunnel

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar on Thursday reviewed progress of different National Highway Projects and major road projects being implemented across Jammu Division by National Highway Authority of India, NHIDCL and Border Roads Organisation.

The Divisional Commissioner was apprised of the progress of package wise stretches of Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, Jammu-Poonch National Highway, Buddal-Mahore-Gul road and highways being developed by NHIDCL in

Chenab Valley region.

Regarding Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, the Divisional Commissioner directed for speedy completion of 3 KM over bridge at Vijaypur.

The Chief Engineer BRO was directed to open both tubes of the Tunnel at Gandharwan on Jammu-Poonch National Highway at the earliest for smooth movement of traffic.

Reviewing the progress of Bhagwati Nagar flyover, the Divisional Commissioner directed NHIDCL to complete the project at the earliest. Discussion was held on several other issues pertaining to land acquisition

and the Forest clearances for the smooth execution of the National Highway Projects.

The Divisional Commissioner directed the concerned officials and District Administrations to resolve all the pending issues for expediting the completion of the remaining part of the National Highway Projects at the earliest.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, Director Geology & Mining Jammu, Chief Engineer Project Beacon/Sampark, Regional Officer NHAI, GM NHIDCL and Project Directors Jammu and Udhampur.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired the UT Level Conference on the lines of DGPs/IGPs conference in Jammu on Thursday. In his address, the Lieutenant Governor said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the UT level security conference will serve as the hub for deliberation and collaboration to develop a whole of government approach to counter terrorism in all its form. He also observed that during DGPs/IGPs conference in Raipur this year, threadbare discussions were held on the theme 'Viksit Bharat: Security Dimensions', which reflects GoI's commit-



LG Manoj Sinha addressing UT Level Conference in Jammu on Thursday.

ment to transform our policing institutions to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. The Lieutenant Governor underlined the need for coordinated action against the terrorists, enablers and the ideologues to eradicate ecosystem and the safe haven.

"The real security gains since 2019 must be defended and

every single terrorist and its supporter operating in valley, forest, hills or village must be neutralised," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said in the past 6 years, we have strengthened the security grid and the collaborative efforts of J&K Police, Army, Intelligence agencies and Central Armed

Police Forces (CAPFs) have led to a significant decline in terrorist violence, in the number of operating terrorists and recruitment.

"Armed terrorists and its supporters, OGWs and those elements intimidating the common citizen should be treated equally. We must ensure they pay a very heavy price for their

action," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also discussed strategies to tackle evolving threats, enhancing intelligence capabilities, and building next-level security grid for new-age security challenges.

"The landscape of security threats has undergone a profound change in recent years. We need to shift from reactive to proactive security strategies and use sophisticated tools like AI to counter terrorism, terror financing, radicalisation, and narco-terrorism threats," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The one-day UT level security conference was attended by Senior J&K Police, Intelligence, Civil Administration and CAPFs officials.

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Act 1999 & Admissions in Professional Colleges of SMVDU

■ DAYA SAGAR

It is pertinent to refer here that Section -5(1a) of Jammu and Kashmir Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Act, 1999 (Act No. XII of 1999) provides that The Lieutenant Governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall be the ex-officio Chairman of the Board, and if the Lieutenant Governor be not a Hindu, then he may nominate an eminent person professing Hindu religion and qualified to be a member; Section-18(6) provides for the Shrine Board to make suitable arrangements for the imparting of religious instructions and general education; Section-21 provides that The Board may make grants in favour of any institution for religious spiritual purposes; whereas Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Act, 1999 in Section-9 provides that The authorities of the University shall be the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, the Executive Council, the Academic Council, the Schools of Studies, the Finance Committee and such other authorities as may be declared by the Statutes & Section -10 further lays down that Shrine Board shall be the supreme authority of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University; and since Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine is a Hindu Shrine which may be reason for some organisations to suggest that Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (

SMVDIME} should have kept the admission in 50 MBBS degree course as started in 2025 only for Hindu students. The demands as made after selection of all candidates in general category on NEET UG 2025 basis for batch of 50 MBBS seats in the Medical College of the said University may appear standing to 'fair test for the reasons of sentimental and religious customs related to the Mata Vaishno Devi Shri Shrine, appear needing some considerations (rather should have been taken note before starting the University / colleges/Schools in the said area). So the issues need be handled/taken care sympathetically but surely keeping in view the legal / constitutional provisions as they exist on date like Section-8(1) of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University Act, 1999 (The Lieutenant Governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall by virtue of his office be the Chancellor of the University) and Section-6 of the SMVDU Act 1999 (The University shall be open to all persons of either sex and of whatever, race, creed, caste or class) and like.

It is also not out of place to mention here that before start of MBBS degree course in the University there are many other general / professional / PG courses started in the SMVDU like (BSc/BA/BBA, MA, Msc, MBA, PhD, B.Tech/Engg, B. Tech in Robotics & Artificial Intelligence ,

B.Arch, B. Tech in Mathematics & Computing , Bio technology etc) and as per information available admission there has been open to all castes / religions except that there have been reservations for different categories like OM or GC/EWS/SC/ST/RBA/ OBC /IB-AIC and like as per the government policy in government institutions but the MBBS admission 2025 have been on open merit without reservations of any type.

As regards religion base reservations & that too 100 percent the subject may need some special laws / constitutional amendment . As regards so far known constitutional provisions the permitted religion based reservations could be like (1). A university established by an Act of Parliament or by an Act of State/ UT Legislature cannot legally grant admissions on the basis of religion in its own constituent / university maintained colleges /departments, except in very narrow constitutionally permitted cases. Exception : a 7 judge bench in the case of AMU ruled in 2024 that a university can claim minority status even if established by a Central Act , provided it was set up by the minority community (not by the state). (2). TMA PAI Foundation (2002), PA INAMDAR(2005),Pramati educational Society (2014) case : Minority insti-



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tutions can give preference only to their own minority upto 50%. (3). Minority institutions declared under Art-30(1) {even if established or funded by state Act } can be allowed reservation upto 50 % of the total seats / vacancies .

4. State universities declared as minority institutions by the State Or NCMEI {National Commission For Minority Educational Institutions established under National Commission For Minority Educational Institutions Act (2004) are allowed reservation only for the declared minority . St. Stephen's College (Delhi), Jamia Millia Islamia, many Christian colleges in Kerala got their minority status from NCMEI (5) And any other related provision that may be there like Hindu Minority some MBBS seats in ASCOMS private medical college in J&K (< initially 100 seats were notified which were later on in 2025 increased, the seats out of 100 were to be distributed as OM Government seats 40, Poor & Backward 10, OM Management 15 seats , Hindu Minority 25 seats, NRI seats 10>) although Hindu have not been declared a minority (national & J&K UT level). A Minority commission can also be appointed at UT/ State level & religious minority can be declared at State/ UT level also. In the Prime Minister's 15 point Programme for

minorities / Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for Minorities it was laid down that that In States, where one of the minority communities notified under Section 2 (e) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 is, in fact, in majority, the earmarking of physical/financial targets under different schemes will be only for the other notified minorities. May be now some review of the policies is initiated by the said University/ said Board/ Government and in case that is done it would be worthwhile to also take care of some other aspects and the features related to the institutions under the said University as related to the tuition fee & other charges, reservations and the requirements of the people residing in the areas around Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji Shrine. It is worth mentioning here that Section- 18(5) of the SMVDS Act 1988 also lays down that it shall be the duty of the Board to undertake the developmental activities concerning the area of the Shrine and its surroundings. Some reservations/ specials for the wards of the people belonging to areas around the shrine falling in Districts of Reasi & Udhampur should be considered like reservation of at least 5 % of the seats in the professional colleges (MBBS, B.E/ B.Tech degrees).

Similarly the offerings made to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine are supposed to be substantial & are to be used for the

University so the tuition fee atleast for the degree courses (Engg/ MBBS) should be like what it is in the government colleges in J&K. As per the act the J&K Government too is supposed to contribute annually to the university. It has been observed that the Engineering Degree Course with the Tuition fee of Rs.141240/year among other charges additionally Annual Charges of Rs.17500/year are also taken and the Tuition fee for MBBS degree course has been kept as Rs.4.95 Lakh / year which is the same as has been kept by the other private medical college (ASCOMS) in UT of J&K which does not sound good. And the like reviews too need be made . And so any amendments if felt necessary have to be considered for review by the SMVDSB/ University Academic Council/ Finance Committee etc and submitted to the appropriate authorities/ Government for n.a concerning the students to be admitted, reservations & the fee etc to be charged keeping in view the suggestions being made as regards the religion of the students/ faculty as well as suggestions also being made for the welfare / development of the people of areas around the Shrine like reservations of seats as well as the tuition fee to be charged.

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