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Ladakh has potential to become India's first AI State: LG Kavinder

STATE TIMES NEWS
LEH: The Lt. Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta, on Wednesday underscored Ladakh's potential to emerge as India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) state and a model of sustainable and inclusive development. He was addressing the Pre-Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit 2026 organised by the IT Department, UT Ladakh.



LG Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta launching e-Seva Model and Village Assessment Module portals.

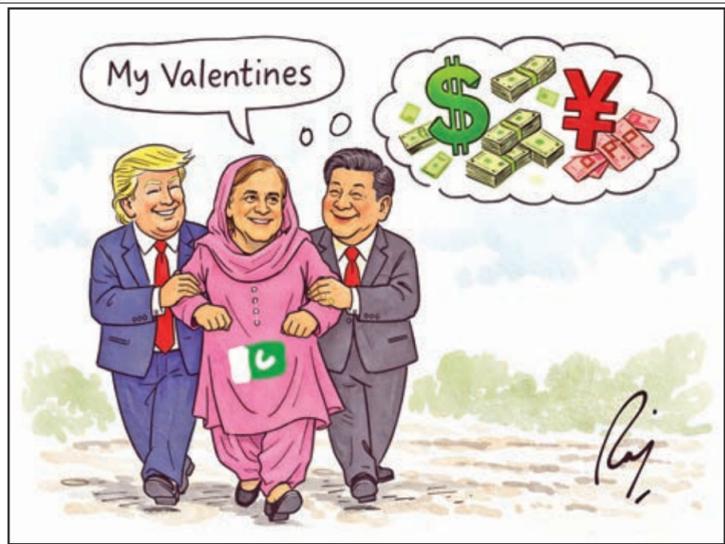
Welcoming participants from across the country, Gupta noted that India is hosting its largest AI Summit in New Delhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, positioning the nation as a global hub for responsible and human-centric AI. He said the pre-summit in Ladakh serves as a vital platform to align the Union Territory's AI roadmap with the national vision of Digital

India and the India AI Mission. Emphasising that technology must remain people-centric, the Lt. Governor stated that AI should strengthen governance, enhance citizen services, and foster inclusive growth. "Technology should serve people, not the other way around," he remarked. Gupta highlighted AI's transformative potential across sectors such as sus-

tainable tourism, agriculture and animal husbandry, healthcare, education and skill development, energy and water management, disaster response, infrastructure, governance, and even space and astronomy. He observed that Ladakh's unique geographical and environmental context presents challenges to conventional development models but offers immense scope for

AI-driven innovation. He further pointed out that with nearly 60 percent of its population comprising youth, Ladakh stands to benefit significantly from AI-led entrepreneurship and skill development. The region's cold climate, he said, offers advantages for energy-efficient data centres, while its renewable energy potential-solar, hydro, geothermal, and hydrogen-can sustain-

ably power AI infrastructure. Highlighting the need for robust digital connectivity, Gupta proposed establishing an AI Centre of Excellence in Ladakh to develop tailored solutions and serve as a model for high-altitude and border regions. He called for collaboration among government, academia, industry, and civil society to ensure Ladakh becomes a creator of AI solutions. Earlier, the Lt. Governor launched the e-Seva Model and Village Assessment Module portals. Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra and Administrative Secretary IT Shashanka Ala also addressed the gathering.



Jammu cannot be subjected to discrimination in Disaster Relief: Zorawar

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Zorawar Singh Jamwal, Spokesperson, BJP Jammu & Kashmir, on Wednesday met Dr. Devansh Yadav, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation, and strongly raised issue continued delay and apparent disparity in the disbursement of compensation to families affected by the 2025 floods in Jammu.



Zorawar Singh Jamwal, Spokesperson, BJP J&K calling on Dr. Devansh Yadav, JMC Commissioner.

Zorawar expressed deep concern that despite the release of substantial funds under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for the financial year 2025-26, many genuine flood-affected families in Jammu have not received fair and adequate compensation. He stated that such delays not only undermine public trust but also deepen the sense of neglect long felt by the people of Jammu. Referring to the 2014

floods in Kashmir, Zorawar Singh Jamwal pointed out that Rs 1,000 crore was provided under Special Plan Assistance, Rs 94.33 crore under SDRF, and overall relief exceeding Rs 1,700 crore was extended. Financial support included Rs 75,000 for house repairs and Rs 3.5 lakh for the families of the deceased, and the rehabilitation process was initiated in a structured and

visible manner. In comparison, for the 2025 floods, Rs 289.39 crore was released under SDRF during 2025-26. Out of this, Rs 120.17 crore was allocated to the Jammu Division and Rs 22.96 crore to the Kashmir Division, amounting to Rs 143.14 crore released under SDRF for both divisions. However, the ground reality in Jammu indicates that the

affected families are still waiting for rightful compensation, raising serious questions about the utilization and monitoring of funds.

Zorawar demanded an immediate transparent audit of the released funds, public disclosure of beneficiary lists, and time-bound disbursement of pending compensation. He categorically stated that disaster relief is a humanitarian obligation, not a matter of political convenience.

"The people of Jammu will not tolerate discrimination or administrative apathy, especially in times of natural calamity. Relief must reach every deserving family without delay," he asserted. Jamwal reiterated that justice, transparency, and equal treatment must form the foundation of disaster management and rehabilitation efforts.

J&K Waqf Board inducts four modern high-tech ambulances into its public services infrastructure

STATE TIMES NEWS
HAZRATBAL: The mission of reforms and transformation in Jammu & Kashmir Waqf Board continues and today the Board inducted four new high-tech Ambulances into the Public Service Infrastructure of the Board.



Chairperson JKWB, Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi and BJP J&K General Secretary (Organisation) Ashok Koul flagging off Ambulances.

For the first time ever, Waqf Board created this health emergency service network at four major shrines of Kashmir Valley. A brief but graceful event was held at Hazratbal today, where Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi formally inducted these modern, highly equipped ambulances into the Waqf Board.

She was accompanied by Ashok Koul, BJP State General Secretary (Organisation) as the Guest of Honour. Executive Magistrate of the Board Ishtiyaq Mohiuddin, Imam & holy-relic keeper Ghulam Mohiuddin Bandy were also present during the event.

Dr Syed Darakhshan & Ashok Koul then flagged off

these high-tech ambulances to four important destinations from where they will start operations soon. These destinations are Dargah Hazratbal in Srinagar district, Babarishi shrine Tangmarg in Baramulla District, Char-e-Sharief Shrine in Budgam district & Aishmuqam shrine in Anantnag district. Speaking on the occasion Ashok Koul said that J&K Waqf Board has really done amazing job in different sectors and has become a role model for other organisations and departments throughout the country.

"The up-gradation of facilities at all spiritual places throughout Jammu & Kashmir is historic as well as inspirations. Many people who were using these funds for their political and personal use opposed a lot to the reformation but under Darakhshan Ji's leadership, the Board has done amazing work. This new initiative adds a new feather to the cap of Dr Andrabi", said Ashok Koul.

In her address Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi said that development, transparency & public welfare have always remained the

guiding principles of our working. "Procurement & induction of these very modern ambulances, equipped with latest medico-emergency facilities, has been our dream project and I thank God for making it happen today. We are deploying these vehicles at four famous shrines in four districts where from they will operate. The people of the localities and from adjoining hamlets will get benefitted", said Syed Darakhshan. All administrators of Waqf Board and Imams & Khateeb were present on the occasion.

Tradition meets innovation during one-day writing workshop at JU

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Department of Journalism and Media Studies and the Translation Club, Utsaah-Club Consortium, JU, in collaboration with the Voice of Dogras, successfully organized a one-day writing workshop titled "Writing Our Jammu: From Culture to Creativity, Jammu Di Kahani, Jammu Di Zubani," here on Friday.



Pradeep Dutta with other dignitaries at a workshop.

The workshop aimed to encourage young writers to explore their voices in their own languages and present the cultural, social, and historical narratives of Jammu through meaningful and responsible storytelling in different languages of Jammu. Under the visionary direction of Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, JU, the workshop was designed as an intensive, hands-on learning experience where participants were introduced to the craft of writing rooted in personal experience, local culture, and historical context.

Pradeep Dutta asserted the power of most "captivating story" which comes from the heart, resulting from ground reality and humanistic chords. He cautioned the students not to rely on ChatGPT for storytelling as it lacks the vocabulary, emotions and true human feelings that respects the dignity of human lives. Naveen Nawaz emphasized on the importance of thinking in the local languages, as they help in forming a true connection with the audiences. He also asked students to

read literature and research Dogra history to strengthen the Dogra culture. During the contextual remarks by Manu Khajuria, Founder, Voice of Dogras, that is registered both in J&K and the United Kingdom, highlighted the importance of telling an honest story and the dangers of single story. She further emphasized on preserving local narratives and appreciated the initiative by the University of Jammu for promoting creative and responsible storytelling among youth.

Prof. Dushyant Kumar Rai said that the role of storytelling can symbolize joy, nostalgia and tie different cultures. He acknowledged the efforts of the resource persons, and participants for bringing out the ideas on table and sharing stories in a compelling way using different innovations in the present times, making the workshop meaningful and successful.

Other faculty members present during the workshop included Dr. Pardeep Singh Bali, Dr. Rameeyan Bhardwaj, Dr. Raviya Gupta and Dr. Kumerjit Chajgotra.

PHE employees stage protest, demand immediate regularization

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Employees of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department, Jammu Province, staged a protest on Wednesday at the Old Chief Engineer's Office on BC Road, expressing strong dissatisfaction over the government's alleged failure to fulfill long-standing commitments.



PHE employees taking out protest rally in Jammu on Wednesday.

Raising slogans and holding placards, the protesters accused the Jammu and Kashmir government of adopting a non-serious approach toward addressing their concerns during the ongoing budget session. They highlighted that several long-pending demands of PHE employees, particularly those related to daily wagers and other categories of staff, remain

unresolved despite repeated assurances. Leaders of the PHE Employees United Front stated that the Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, had last year assured the formation of a committee to examine the issues concerning daily wagers and other categories of work-

ers. However, the protesters alleged that no substantial steps have been taken to implement these promises. The United Front demanded the immediate regularization of services and guaranteed job security for employees who have been serving in the depart-

ment for several years. They emphasized that the workforce is critical to ensuring smooth delivery of essential water and sanitation services, and continued neglect of their grievances hampers the department's functioning. The demonstrators warned that if their

demands are not addressed promptly, they would escalate their agitation in the coming days. The protest concluded with the leaders urging the government to honor its commitments and implement time-bound measures to resolve the pending issues, calling for a collaborative approach to safeguard employee rights while ensuring uninterrupted service delivery. The protest witnessed participation from a large number of PHE employees, who highlighted the urgent need for administrative reforms and a fair policy to address long-standing grievances. The United Front assured that the movement will continue until satisfactory action is taken by the government to address the employees' demands.

RBI holds 69th Empowered Committee Meeting on MSMEs

STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The 69th meeting of the Empowered Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) for the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, covering the quarter ended December 31, 2025, was held at the Jammu office of the Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday. The meeting was chaired by Regional Director Shri Chandrasekhar Azad and attended by senior officials from key financial institutions, industry bodies, and government departments.



Participants included representatives from KVIC, MSME-Development and Facilitation Office, Department of Industries & Commerce, major public and private sector banks,

announced in the Union Budget 2026-27, including the proposed Rs 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund aimed at supporting high-potential MSMEs and an additional Rs 2,000 crore allocation to enhance risk capital for micro-units. He also referred to the RBI's recent developmental and regulatory policy announcements, particularly the enhancement of collateral-free loan limits from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh for micro and small enterprises.

The chair noted encouraging progress under MSME Annual Credit Plans for FY 2025-26 in both UTs and urged banks to further strengthen credit flow to the sector. Emphasis was also laid on promoting Udyam registration, digital adoption, and improved last-mile credit delivery. Banks were encouraged to actively participate in Financial Literacy Week 2026, themed "KYC - Your First Step

to Safe Banking." During the meeting, the committee reviewed key performance indicators, including TReDS implementation, Udyam registration progress, flow of credit to MSMEs, CGT/MSME coverage, NPA levels, PMEGP-sponsored cases, and rehabilitation of stressed units under the Framework for Revival and Rehabilitation. Banking infrastructure in MSME clusters and progress on targets recommended by the Prime Minister's Task Force on MSMEs were also assessed. The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment from stakeholders to strengthen financial inclusion and support sustainable growth of MSMEs across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.