

Administrative Secretary, Tourism, UT Ladakh Chairs Consultative Meeting with Local Stakeholders on Petroglyph Park Proposal in Ladakh

Leh, June 09, 2026: Shri Sanjit Rodrigues, Administrative Secretary, Tourism & Culture Department, Union Territory of Ladakh, today chaired a high-level meeting with Nambardars/ Gobas of concerned villages, researchers, heritage experts, and members of the committee constituted for the identification and transfer of vulnerable petroglyph-bearing boulders. The meeting was held in connection with the proposed establishment of a Petroglyph Park at Sindhu Ghat, Leh.

The deliberations focused on exploring the scientific relocation of endangered petroglyph-bearing rocks from various locations across Ladakh to a secure and professionally managed site. The initiative aims to ensure the long-term preservation of Ladakh's prehistoric heritage while creating a dedicated centre for education, research, and cultural tourism.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Rodrigues underscored the immense cultural significance of petroglyphs, describing them as invaluable assets that embody the history, traditions, and identity of Ladakh. He emphasized that these ancient rock carvings are rare and irreplaceable, and their preservation is crucial for future generations. He clarified that the objective of the proposed park is not to displace heritage from villages, but to safeguard vulnerable petroglyphs that are at risk due to natural erosion, developmental activities, and other external factors.

Shri Rodrigues further highlighted that the proposed Petroglyph Park would serve as a significant educational and cultural resource, benefiting students, researchers, visitors, and local communities alike. He assured village representatives that the initiative would be pursued only through consultation and with the consent of the concerned communities, and that no decisions would be imposed unilaterally.

During the meeting, Dr. Tashi Ladawa, Researcher and Associate Professor at Government Eliezer Joldan Memorial College, stressed the urgent need for conservation. He cited instances of rock art sites that have already been lost due to neglect, environmental degradation, and human intervention. He noted that nearly 800 petroglyph sites have been identified across Ladakh, cautioning that each loss represents an irreversible erosion of history. Dr. Ladawa also underscored the importance of systematic documentation and timely preservation efforts.

Dr. Sonam Wangchuk, Founder of the Himalayan Cultural Heritage Foundation, highlighted the broader significance of conserving Ladakh's archaeological heritage. He informed that a committee of experts has been established to identify and document vulnerable petroglyphs requiring immediate attention. Approximately 200 petroglyph-bearing rocks have already been categorized as highly vulnerable. He remarked that the proposed Petroglyph Park has the potential to become the first initiative of its kind in India and could emerge as a model for heritage conservation.

The meeting also saw active participation from Gobas and Nambardars of several villages, particularly Stakmo, where a significant concentration of petroglyph-bearing rocks is located. Village representatives expressed support for the conservation of vulnerable sites while recommending that petroglyphs not facing immediate threats be preserved in situ. Suggestions were also made to develop village-level heritage parks and interpretation centres to enhance local stewardship and awareness.

Responding positively, Shri Rodrigues assured that the UT Administration would extend full support to community-led heritage conservation initiatives. He encouraged village representatives to identify suitable land and submit proposals, reiterating that community participation would remain central to the preservation strategy.

Mr. Viraf Mehta, Social Anthropologist, also shared insights on the cultural and historical value of petroglyphs. He emphasized that the symbols and carvings on these rocks offer vital insights into the lives, beliefs, and movements of ancient communities, and therefore merit wider recognition and protection.

Participants unanimously acknowledged the importance of preserving Ladakh's rock art heritage and emphasized the need for collaborative efforts involving local communities, researchers, experts, and the Administration to safeguard this legacy for future generations. Nambardars and Gobas of the concerned villages expressed their support for the initiative and conveyed their willingness to cooperate in the relocation of identified vulnerable petroglyph-bearing boulders to the proposed park for their preservation.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Sonam Wangchuk, Founder, Himalayan Cultural Heritage Foundation; Dr. Tashi Ladawa, Researcher and Associate Professor; Mr. Viraf Mehta, Social Anthropologist; Gobas and Nambardars of concerned villages; Deputy Director, Archives, Archaeology and Museums Department; members of the Petroglyph Committee; and officials from various departments.

