

## Ladakh Hosts One-Day State Orientation on Mission Vatsalya and Ethical Adoption Practices



**Leh, July 4, 2026:** The Department of Social and Tribal Welfare, Union Territory of Ladakh, in collaboration with the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) and the State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA), Ladakh, organized a one-day State Orientation-cum-Training Programme for functionaries of Mission Vatsalya and key stakeholders at Hotel Abduz, Leh.

The programme witnessed the participation of officials from the Police Department, Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Specialized Adoption Agencies (SAAs), Child Care Institutions (CCIs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), representatives from various departments and organizations, resource persons, and officials from Kargil, reflecting a collective commitment towards strengthening child protection and adoption mechanisms in the Union Territory.

The programme commenced with the traditional Khatak ceremony to welcome the chief guest and resource persons, followed by a welcome address by Programme Officer, SARA Ladakh, Ms. Ibteesum Iqbal. She emphasized the significance of capacity building and inter-departmental coordination in ensuring effective implementation of Mission Vatsalya and creating a robust child protection ecosystem across Ladakh.

Delivering the inaugural technical session, Mr. Yash Yadav, Junior Professional at the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), provided a comprehensive overview of CARA, its mandate, and its pivotal role in regulating and monitoring adoption in India. He explained that CARA functions under the Ministry of Women and Child Development as the statutory body responsible for promoting ethical, transparent, and child-centric adoption practices in accordance with the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption.

Mr. Yadav elaborated on various modes of adoption, including in-country adoption, inter-country adoption, relative adoption, step-parent adoption, and foster adoption. Stressing the importance of Mission Vatsalya, he highlighted that timely registration of children on the Mission Vatsalya portal enables proper identification, monitoring, and safeguarding of children while facilitating coordination with district authorities, police, and other stakeholders. He underscored the collective responsibility of Child Protection Units, NGOs, judicial authorities, and government agencies in ensuring every child in need receives appropriate care and legal protection through transparent procedures.

The technical sessions also featured an extensive presentation by Dr. Vasundhara, Managing Trustee and child protection expert, who provided detailed insights into the legal framework governing adoption and foster care under the Juvenile Justice Act and Adoption Regulations. She explained the procedures relating to orphaned, abandoned, and surrendered children, highlighting the legal distinctions between these categories and the timelines prescribed under the regulations. She discussed the roles of Child Welfare Committees, Specialized Adoption Agencies, police authorities, and District Child Protection Units in conducting social investigations, preparing statutory reports, uploading child profiles, and ensuring timely processing of adoption cases.

Dr. Vasundhara further elaborated on eligibility criteria for prospective adoptive parents, referral procedures, pre-adoption foster care, adoption orders, adoption under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) and the Juvenile Justice Act, as well as procedures for children adopted under HAMA who subsequently relocate abroad. She also discussed foster care provisions, hard-to-

place children, cradle baby reception centres, children with disabilities, and the importance of family-based care over institutionalization wherever possible.

Participants actively engaged in discussions, seeking clarifications on foster care eligibility, adoption procedures, and legal safeguards. In another technical session, Mr. Yash Yadav explained the procedural and legal aspects of relative adoption and step-parent adoption, supported by flowcharts and timelines under the Juvenile Justice Act. He emphasized the need to curb illegal adoption practices through mandatory registration, regular inspections, documentation, and community awareness. Stressing the role of social media and youth participation, he encouraged stakeholders to spread awareness regarding legal adoption procedures. He also responded to queries related to abandoned infants, trafficking concerns, and responsibilities of district authorities in identifying children eligible for adoption.

Adding further perspective, Mr. Sharif Bhat, Head of Mission Bal Raksha, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh delivered an insightful presentation on strengthening child protection systems in the context of the Juvenile Justice Act and Mission Vatsalya. Drawing upon decades of experience in child rights, he highlighted the evolution of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), emphasizing that child protection requires strong institutional mechanisms supported by legal awareness, coordinated action, and community participation.

He stressed that every stakeholder must thoroughly understand the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act to effectively address cases involving children. Highlighting concerns such as child trafficking, substance abuse, child labour, institutional care, school safety, and the increasing challenges posed by digital exposure, he called for integrated training of officials, stronger district coordination committees, and improved collaboration among police, judiciary, education, health departments, and child protection institutions. He also underscored the importance of maintaining child privacy, conducting proper social investigations, developing standard operating procedures, and prioritizing the best interests of every child.

The concluding session was addressed by Ms. Nahida Bano, Nodal Officer for Special Children, DIET Leh, who emphasized the importance of empathy, patience, and emotional connection while working with children. Sharing practical experiences from her work with vulnerable and specially-abled children, she highlighted how meaningful engagement, effective communication, and inclusive teaching approaches can transform children's lives. She stressed that child protection extends beyond legal procedures and requires compassion, collaboration, proper documentation, and sustained support at the grassroots level.

The programme concluded with an interactive question-and-answer session, allowing participants to discuss practical challenges relating to foster care, adoption procedures, child protection mechanisms, and inter-agency coordination. The exchange of ideas reinforced the importance of continuous capacity building and collaborative efforts in strengthening Ladakh's child protection system.

The orientation programme served as a significant platform for enhancing the knowledge and capacities of Mission Vatsalya functionaries and stakeholders, reaffirming the commitment of the Department of Social and Tribal Welfare, CARA, and SARA Ladakh towards ensuring every child grows up in a safe, secure, and nurturing family environment through transparent, ethical, and legally compliant child protection and adoption practices.