

## **UT Ladakh Gears Up for Tourist Season: Transport Secretary Reviews Readiness and Directs Immediate Enforcement and Reforms**

**Leh, April 4, 2025:** In a proactive move to ensure a smooth and well-regulated tourist season, the Administrative Secretary of the Transport Department, Union Territory of Ladakh, Shri Bhupesh Chaudhary, convened a comprehensive review meeting at the UT Secretariat.

The meeting focused on transport preparedness, enforcement strategies, and administrative reforms, aiming to enhance mobility, tourist experience, and departmental efficiency across Ladakh.

During the meeting, Shri Chaudhary conducted an in-depth review of enforcement operations and called for robust, daily reporting mechanisms from both Assistant Regional Transport Officers (ARTOs) of Leh and Kargil.

These daily updates are expected to include real-time data on violations, corrective actions, and emerging trends, ensuring strict accountability and swift decision-making on enforcement matters.

Underscoring the importance of a well-organized internal structure, the Secretary emphasized that the smooth functioning of the department depends on a rational division of responsibilities among officers and staff. He instructed all teams to adopt a cooperative, task-oriented approach that prioritizes timely service delivery and efficient coordination, especially during the high-traffic tourist season.

A major focus of the discussion was the persistent challenge of traffic congestion, illegal parking, and the obstruction of vehicle movement on key routes—issues that tend to escalate with the tourist influx.

Shri Chaudhary directed immediate, on-ground action to identify and decongest critical junctions, regulate parking spaces, and streamline the movement of vehicles in popular tourist zones. He stressed that dedicated traffic personnel must be deployed in congestion-prone areas, and that visibility, signage, and real-time coordination with the police and local bodies are essential for effective management.

The Secretary also addressed the unauthorized establishment of check posts by private unions or individuals, a concern that has been reported in areas like Chilling.

Reiterating the government's firm stance on rule of law, he categorically stated that no group or individual is permitted to set up any form of check post without valid authorization. Any attempt to stop or harass tourists or drivers in possession of valid permits will be dealt with firmly and will invite immediate administrative action.

Recognizing that drivers, particularly those in the taxi and tourism sectors, are often the first point of contact for visitors, the Secretary directed the launch of a comprehensive sensitization and training programme.

This initiative will focus on developing courteous and professional behavior among drivers, while also making them aware of Ladakh's tourism protocols, cultural expectations, and emergency response practices. The aim is to build a fleet of transport personnel who not only comply with regulations but also enhance the overall visitor experience.

In addition to enforcement and behavioral reforms, the Secretary also reviewed the functioning of the transport department's permit issuance system. He directed officials to introduce procedural improvements that would ensure faster, more transparent permit processing, while reducing bottlenecks.

Furthermore, he announced that a dedicated grievance redressal mechanism—comprising a complaint helpline and an official email ID—would soon be activated to address public concerns in real-time and build citizen trust in the system.

The revision and proper dissemination of taxi fares also came up for discussion.

The Secretary directed that updated fare charts be finalized in consultation with stakeholders and widely published across print, digital, and public spaces, including at taxi stands and tourist reception centers. This move is expected to ensure transparency, protect tourists from overcharging, and create a fair working environment for registered drivers.

Another key area of focus was the updating and cleansing of the VAHAN database. The Secretary noted the issue of duplicate vehicle entries and outdated records of scrapped vehicles, and instructed ARTOs to carry out a thorough audit and data correction exercise at the earliest.

Simultaneously, he urged the speedy implementation of High-Security Registration Plates (HSRP) across the region to improve vehicle traceability and enhance road safety.

Ongoing projects under the Special Development Package (SDP) were also reviewed during the meeting. Shri Chaudhary stressed the need for timely execution and close monitoring of these initiatives, directing officials to submit weekly progress reports and resolve any administrative delays to ensure public benefits are delivered as scheduled.

The meeting was attended by the Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Ladakh; Assistant Regional Transport Officers of Leh and Kargil; Deputy Superintendents of Police (Traffic) from Leh and Kargil; the Under Secretary to Secretary, Transport; and other concerned departmental officers. The deliberations reflected the UT Administration's commitment to proactive governance and its readiness to deliver a well-managed, welcoming, and efficient tourism experience in Ladakh.



