

L-G VK Saxena approves New LAHDC (Nautor Regularisation) Rules, 2026, paving way for proprietary rights of Nautor Land

Authority for allotting Nautor land now vested in LAHDCs

Rules to provide legal certainty to genuine Nautor landholders and enable eligible land to be utilised as a financial asset

L-G says Rules strike balance between protecting legitimate interests of genuine Nautor landholders and safeguarding public and Council land

Leh, September 4: The Union Territory of Ladakh, under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, has taken another historic step towards resolving a long-pending and contentious issue of regularising and granting ownership of “Nautor” Land in Ladakh, with the Lieutenant Governor today approving the landmark Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (Nautor Regularisation) Rules, 2026.

The Rules provide a comprehensive framework for granting proprietary rights/ownership of up to 10 acres of eligible Nautor land holdings to the occupants, across all seven districts of Ladakh. For Nautor land beyond the 10-acre limit, the proprietary rights may be allotted on a leasehold basis, in accordance with the Rules. The Rules offer a one-time regularisation mechanism for Nautor land, occupied before the repeal of the J&K Tenancy Act, 1980, on October 27, 2020. Any possession of Nautor land after this cut-off date will be ineligible for regularisation.

Nautor land refers to barren or wasteland, owned by the government, that was earlier allotted to individuals for cultivation or other productive use. More than 60,000 acres of land in the UT of Ladakh is presently recorded in revenue records as Nautor holdings.

Till now, the absence of a clear and uniform legal framework has restricted the effective utilisation of Nautor land till now. In particular, landholders with limited or non-proprietary rights were unable to use the land as a financial asset, including for purposes such as obtaining loans against it. At the same time, the absence of uniform rules also posed a threat of claims and disputes over government/Council land.

According to the Rules, the authority to allot Nautor land is now vested in LAHDCs in all seven districts. “Under Section 42 of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997, land within the district stands transferred to the Council, while clause (i) of Section 23 vests executive powers in the Council in relation to the allotment, use and occupation of land vested in it,” the Rules read.

L-G Shri Saxena said that the Rules provide a much-needed legal certainty to genuine Nautor landholders, bring in transparency and accountability into the regularisation process, establish uniform procedures across the Union Territory and, at the same time, safeguard the land vested in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) from encroachment and unauthorised claims.

“The Nautor issue has a deep historical connection with the lives and livelihoods of the people of Ladakh. For generations, our people have worked hard to bring barren and waste land under cultivation in one of the most challenging agricultural environments in the country. These Rules provide a transparent and uniform mechanism to address this long-pending issue and give legal certainty to genuine holders. It will also enable such land to be utilised as a financial asset, including for availing bank loans,” said L-G Shri Saxena.

The rules will be put for public consultation for two weeks before the final notification is issued.

Key provisions of the Nautor Regularisation Rules, 2026, include:

- Genuine eligible Nautor holders may be granted proprietary rights up to 10 acres. The amount payable for “proprietary right” will be at par with the market rate notified by the Administration for the concerned revenue village.
- Proprietary rights of Nautor land beyond the 10-acre limit may be allotted on a leasehold basis, in accordance with the Rules. For leasehold allotments, the premium will be 80 per cent of the notified market rate.

- For Gair Mustaqil holdings, field verification by Revenue Authorities will be mandatory to establish the identity of the occupant, area under occupation, nature and extent of cultivation, date of possession and whether the occupation existed before the cut-off date.
- In the case of Mustaqil landholdings, the respective LAHDC will decide whether field verification is required based on ground realities.
- Regularisation will be considered only where occupation existed prior to the cut-off date of 27 October 2020.
- Abandoned land and land found to have been encroached upon will not be eligible for allotment and will be liable to eviction.
- Nautor land mutated prior to the cut-off date where a change in land use has taken place may also be regularised, subject to formal approval of the change in land use by the Competent Authority.
- Land regularised under the Rules may be mortgaged in favour of Scheduled Banks, Financial Institutions and Government-backed lending agencies, for development of the land.
- In municipal areas, planning areas and areas covered by Master Plans, Zonal Plans or Development Authorities, land use will have to conform strictly to the applicable planning regulations.
- All allotments and regularisations will be subject to periodic review and audit. Violations, misrepresentation, concealment of facts, non-utilisation, unauthorised transfer or breach of conditions may result in cancellation or resumption of land.