

## FM Nirmala Sitharaman lays foundation stone for Mini Planetarium and Astro Globe at Hanle Dark Sky Reserve

Hanle, Ladakh – June 15, 2025:

On the 3rd day of her visit to Ladakh, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman laid the foundation stone for a Mini Planetarium and Astro Globe at the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve in the Changthang region of the Union Territory. The initiative, sanctioned under the Special Development Package (SDP), comes at an estimated cost of ₹276.65 lakh and aims to promote scientific education, astro-tourism, stargazing, night sky programs, and generate local employment. At the Baba Atomic Research Centre's Major Atmospheric Cherenkov Experiment (MACE) Telescope facility in Hanle, Prof. Annapurni Subramaniam, Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), and Dr K.K. Yadav from the Astrophysical Sciences Division, BARC presented the telescope's current achievements and future plans.

Applauding the efforts of IIA and the local community, Mrs Sitharaman remarked, "This project symbolizes a collaborative spirit between the scientific and public community, a true matter of national pride." She urged the development of programs tailored for common public to spark interest in astrophysics through hands-on learning and proactively putting out content generated through these scientific centres.

During her journey to Hanle, Sitharaman engaged with delegations of Anganwadi workers, contractor associations, and BJP members from Nyoma, attentively listening to their concerns. At Rongo, she visited an animal husbandry site where she met with mostly female pashmina goat and yak herders. The Minister distributed goat-shearing machines to support their livelihood.

As part of the Dharti Aaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan, Sitharaman interacted with campaign beneficiaries. She also presented a ₹50 lakh cheque to Nyoma nomads under SBI's Corporate Social Responsibility initiative. The funds will support the construction of 16 community tents, each accommodating up to 30 herders to help nomadic grazers during their movement. The Departments of Sheep and Animal Husbandry hosted a live demonstration of the nomadic lifestyle. Additionally, the Department of S&TW showcased a mobile Anganwadi center for nomadic children and displayed millet-based dishes prepared within the center.

The Union Minister was accompanied by Ladakh's Secretary of Tourism, Vikram Singh Malik; Secretary of S&TW Department, Shashanka Ala; Chief Conservator of Wildlife, Sajjad Mufti; and DC Leh, Santosh Sukhdeve, SSP, Leh Shruti Arora, Scientists and technical team of Indian Astronomical Observatory, Hanley and concern Directors, HoDs of UT Ladakh.





