

**Ability Mela 2025: LG Kavinder Gupta calls for Equal Opportunities & Barrier-Free Access for Divyangjans
Reiterates UT Administration's strong & inclusive support systems for Divyang Highlights Inclusive
Empowerment on International Day of Persons with Disabilities Highlights PM Modi's Vision for
empowerment of Divyang Distributes tri-scooter, hearing aids & Braille devices to beneficiaries**

Leh, December 4: The Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Shri Kavinder Gupta, inaugurated the Ability Mela 2025 at the Panchayat Resource Centre, Leh, marking the observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2025. The event, organised by the District Social Welfare Office (DSWO) in collaboration with PAGIR, Munsel, and Rewa Society, aims to enhance employability, promote dignified livelihoods, and further strengthen Ladakh's commitment to building an inclusive and accessible society for all.

Addressing a large gathering of participants, officials, community representatives, and members of civil society, the Lt Governor reiterated that the International Day of Persons with Disabilities must be seen not merely as an annual observance but as a powerful reminder of humanity's shared responsibility to uphold equality, dignity, and respect. He said the day symbolises the belief that ability is not defined by physical conditions but by determination, hard work, discipline, and aspirations. He commended the people of Ladakh—especially its divyangjans—for their exemplary resilience and courage, praising their capacity to overcome challenges posed by the region's harsh climate and terrain.

The Lt Governor highlighted Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's transformative vision for the empowerment of divyangjans, stating that the Government of India envisions them not as passive recipients of support but as active contributors and inspirations to the nation's growth story. He reaffirmed the Union Territory Administration's resolve to ensure comprehensive support systems that include accessible infrastructure, quality education, skill development, healthcare, rehabilitation services, and meaningful participation in governance and socio-economic activities.

Shri Kavinder Gupta expressed deep admiration for individuals with disabilities who continue to set new benchmarks of excellence across fields such as sports, arts, academics, culture, and entrepreneurship. He urged society to move beyond symbolic gestures and adopt a sustained and practical approach towards inclusion—one that ensures equal opportunities, barrier-free environments, and recognition of merit. He outlined key initiatives underway in Ladakh, including scholarships for students with disabilities, skill-enhancement and livelihood programmes, promotion of self-employment, provision of assistive devices, and strict implementation of equal-opportunity norms across government departments.

The Lt Governor placed special emphasis on motivating the youth, encouraging them to treat challenges as opportunities for growth. Citing several inspiring examples of young divyang achievers from Ladakh and across the country, he said, "We must write our own destiny and never allow physical limitations to define our potential." He called upon families, institutions, and the wider community to collectively nurture a culture where divyangjans can thrive with dignity, independence, and confidence.

The celebration included active participation from Secretariat staff, association members, and key officials. The Ability Mela represents a firm step towards a more inclusive Ladakh, fostering respect, equality, and empowerment for all persons with disabilities.

The Lt Governor distributed tri-scooters, hearing aids and Braille devices to beneficiaries under the Kuns-nyoms scheme- a subsidised programme launched by the LAHDC Leh, to provide assistive aids to beneficiaries with disabilities. He also felicitated Sonam Sopari, Dorjay Stakmo and Sonam Angchuk- notable personalities associated with the Tses-Ngon video, featuring persons with disabilities. He also visited the stalls showcasing products, scholarship schemes for students, pension schemes and other initiatives of DSWO and other civil society organisations (CSOs)

Speaking on the occasion, Administrative Secretary Shashanka Ala, through a detailed presentation, highlighted the Status Report of PwDs in Ladakh to ensure an inclusive region, informing that Ladakh currently has around 4223 PwDs, with majority in the 45+ age category and PwDs in the 6-17 years age category in need of inclusive education. She informed that PwDs in Ladakh would be employed in the hospitality sector by All Ladakh Hotel and Guest House Association (ALHGHA) and Merchant Association after their proper skill training. She also informed about various interventions, new initiatives, skill and employment support, governance and system reforms of the Department of Social and Tribal Welfare.

Administrative Secretary Bhanu Prabha, in her address, informed that plumbing and other skilling training programmes would be provided to PwDs at ITI to make them employable. She also highlighted the need to identify children with special needs at an early stage so that necessary interventions could be provided to them at special schools. She further informed about the upcoming special school at Trespone, which is being constructed at a cost of Rs 7 crores. She requested parents to come forward with their child with special needs so that special education and necessary therapy could be provided to them.

Tsewang Dorjey from PAGIR thanked the UT Administration and the concerned departments, civil society organisations for organising the Ability Mela 2025 and requested the Administration to ensure adequate inclusive facilities for PwDs.

District Social Welfare Officer, Leh, Mohd Safdar Bhat, delivered the vote of thanks.

Director, Social and Tribal Welfare, Kunzes Angmo; Director, School Education Department, Tashi Dolma; ADDC Leh, Sonam Nurboo, officials from civil society organisations, members of religious institutions, government officials and students of special schools were present during the event.



