

## **LG Kavinder Gupta visits Puga Geothermal and Pang Solar Projects Reaffirms Vision of Carbon-Neutral Ladakh Assures livelihood of Changthang nomads will not be affected**

Leh, December 12: The Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Shri Kavinder Gupta, visited the Changthang area to review the progress of two flagship clean energy projects—the 1 MW Geothermal Power Project at Puga being implemented by ONGC and the 11GW Solar Power Project at Pang being implemented by SECI. Both projects are pivotal to realising the vision of making Ladakh a carbon-neutral region and a national hub of renewable energy, in line with the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi.

At Puga hot springs, the site of the ongoing 1 MW Geothermal Energy Project, the Lt Governor was informed that drilling of 450 metres has been completed and an additional 600 metres of drilling will be finished over the next few months. Two thermal wells are being constructed to tap geothermal energy, and it was further appraised that, contrary to initial estimates, the project is expected to generate around 4 MW of power instead of 1 MW. The generated power will be integrated into the grid and supplied for domestic consumption to nearby villages, making it the first such geothermal project of its kind in the country.

Chief Secretary, Dr Pawan Kotwal, briefed the Lt Governor on the medicinal properties of the hot springs at Chumathang and Puga and informed that the Administration is planning to develop hot and cold bath facilities at the hot spring sites to promote wellness tourism and provide better amenities for local residents and visitors.

At Pang, the Lt Governor inspected the ongoing work at the site of the proposed 11 GW Solar Power Plant and reviewed the 500 KWP Solar Demonstration Project. He was informed that the demonstration plant, constructed at a cost of Rs 4.93 crore, was completed in three months to showcase to local residents—especially nomadic communities—that their cattle can safely graze within and around the solar plant site without any adverse impact. It was informed that the solar photovoltaic panels have been installed with a ground clearance of 1200 mm, leaving ample space for grass to grow and animals to feed underneath. The piling design has been strengthened to support the raised structure and configured in a manner that does not pose any risk of injury to livestock.

The Chief Secretary informed that two scientists/research scholars from the University of Ladakh have been engaged to study the impact of solar photovoltaic panel installation on grass growth and the local ecosystem, ensuring that the project remains environmentally compatible with Changthang's pastoral livelihoods. Project engineers from Sunnergy Systems and LREDA briefed the Lt Governor that all inverters and components of the demonstration project have been rigorously tested to withstand Ladakh's extreme climatic conditions—ranging from high summer irradiance to sub-zero winter temperatures. The project was commissioned in the last week of October, and power from the plant is already being supplied to residents in the area.

During his visit, the Lt Governor also interacted with a delegation at Tsokar led by Nambardar Samad Rokchan, who raised issues related to unreliable mobile connectivity, the need for a dedicated Medical Officer at the local Health and Wellness Centre, and allocation of a designated area for commercial establishments to support livelihood opportunities.

The Lt Governor described both the Puga geothermal and Pang solar projects as critical milestones toward making Ladakh carbon-neutral and building it as a hub for solar and geothermal energy. He noted that Ladakh, with over 300 sunny days a year, has immense potential to become the solar energy hub of the country and emphasised that the 11 GW solar project will not only generate substantial revenue by selling power to other states but also create significant employment opportunities for local youth and communities. He assured residents and nomadic herders that their traditional livelihoods and grazing rights would be protected, pointing to the demonstration project as proof that cattle can move and graze freely beneath and around the solar installations. He added that these projects will ensure reliable 24x7 power supply to remote areas.

Highlighting the role of Changthang pashmina in the local economy, the Lt Governor underlined that pashmina-based livelihoods, especially for Changthang communities and their self-help groups, are central to the region's

socio-economic fabric. He assured that all efforts will be made to promote Changthang pashmina at national and international platforms.

The Chief Secretary also briefed the Lt Governor on the Hemya–Nyoma transmission line and its expected impact in providing reliable, uninterrupted power to the people of the region. He further informed about the construction of fully insulated homes for nomadic families under the Changthang Development Package, under which huts costing Rs 15 lakh each are being provided, with 30 such clusters planned across Changthang to enhance living conditions and resilience against extreme winters.

The Lt Governor reiterated that the UT Administration, in close coordination with the Government of India, remains fully committed to leveraging Ladakh's rich solar and geothermal resources for clean energy, while safeguarding the environment, sustaining traditional livelihoods, and ensuring inclusive development for the people of Changthang and Ladakh at large.

Among those present during the Lt Governor's visit to Changthang were Chief Secretary Dr Pawan Kotwal, Administrative Secretary PDD Rudra Goud, Deputy Commissioner Leh Romil Singh Donk, SSP Leh Shree Raam R, SDM Nyoma Kacho Asgar Ali Khan, and senior officials from PDD and other government departments.

Photo caption:

Hon'ble Lt Governor at Puga Geothermal Project site

Hon'ble Lt Governor in a meeting with residents of Samad Rokchan/Tsokar

Hon'ble Lt Governor at Pang Solar Power project site





