

## **Secretary Horticulture Visits Centre of Excellence for Seabuckthorn at Nimoo; Reviews Expansion and Processing Initiatives**

**Leh, April 25, 2025:** Secretary Horticulture, UT Ladakh, Sh. Bhupesh Chaudhary, IAS, conducted an extensive visit to the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Seabuckthorn Cultivation at Nimoo to review the ongoing developmental initiatives, horticultural demonstrations, and processing facilities established to boost high-value horticulture in the region.

The Secretary was accompanied by Director Horticulture, Sh. Tsewang Phunchok; Chief Horticulture Officer, Leh Smt. Kunzang Wangmo; In charge Apricot Processing unit, Nimoo, Tsering Ngodup and other departmental officials.

During the visit, the Director Horticulture briefed the Secretary about the expansion work being carried out at the Centre, including the development of an additional 8 Kanals of land exclusively for Sea buckthorn nursery and orchard.

The department has also been conducting regular on-site demonstrations and training programs for farmers to promote Sea buckthorn cultivation, which is emerging as one of the most commercially viable crops in Ladakh.

Seabuckthorn, a hardy shrub native to the cold desert, is widely known for producing berries that are extremely rich in Vitamin C and antioxidants. Ladakh accounts for a significant share of India's total Seabuckthorn production, and its cultivation holds immense potential for increasing farmers' income through both domestic consumption and value-added exports.

The Secretary appreciated the department's efforts and directed the Director Horticulture to bring all available cultivable land under Seabuckthorn plantation within the Centre. He emphasised that such demonstration plots not only serve as proof of concept but are essential for motivating and training farmers to adopt Seabuckthorn as a primary crop, given its high demand and profitability.

As part of the visit, the Secretary also inspected the apricot nursery, apple orchard, and almond orchard maintained at the Centre. He lauded the quality of maintenance and varietal diversification being pursued by the department in support of Ladakh's horticultural development.

Further, the Secretary visited the Seabuckthorn and apricot processing unit housed within the CoE campus and interacted with the local entrepreneur, Sh. Gyalton, who is actively managing the facility. During the interaction, Sh. Gyalton apprised the Secretary of the substantial unmet demand for both apricot and Sea buckthorn products, not only within domestic markets but also at the international level. He highlighted that the current levels of raw produce collection and processing fall short of market requirements, leading to lost opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs alike.

In response, Secretary Chaudhary instructed the Horticulture Department and the entrepreneur to jointly work towards maximising raw material procurement and processing capacity for the upcoming harvest season. He stressed that the focus must remain on improving the economic returns for local farmers by ensuring better price realisation and market connectivity for their produce.

The visit underscores the UT Administration's broader commitment to strengthening Ladakh's agro-economy through sustainable horticulture, value chain development, and entrepreneurial support. The initiatives at Nimoo are expected to play a pivotal role in transforming Seabuckthorn and apricot cultivation into major drivers of rural prosperity in the region.



