

The Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, attended a Mega Camp and Awareness Programme on "Empowering Tribals through Legal Services and Defence Civil Action" at Rinchen Auditorium Hall, Leh. The programme was organised by the Ladakh Legal Services Authority in collaboration with 14 Corps of the Army.

The event was graced by the presence of Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena; Hon'ble Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli; Justice Sindhu Sharma, Executive Chairperson, LLSA and other Hon'ble Judges of the High Court. Also present were Lt. Gen. Hitesh Bhalla, General Officer Commanding, 14 Corps; Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh, Dr. Ashish Kundra, IAS; Director General of Police, Ladakh, Mukesh Singh, IPS; senior officers of the UT Administration; President & members of the Bar; representatives of the armed forces; and other distinguished dignitaries.

In her welcome address, Hon'ble Mrs. Justice Sindhu Sharma Judge High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Executive Chairman Ladakh Legal Services Authority, welcomed the dignitaries and highlighted the significance of the programme in strengthening justice delivery mechanisms in remote and far-flung areas. She also acknowledged the vital role of the Indian Army in facilitating access to legal services in Ladakh.

Addressing the gathering, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India expressed gratitude to the people of Ladakh and the UT Administration for the invitation. His Lordship described the inauguration of the District Court Complex at Leh and the establishment of the office of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority as significant milestones towards ensuring access to justice, particularly in a geographically vast and challenging region.

Emphasising the importance of robust judicial infrastructure, the Hon'ble Chief Justice observed that court complexes are not merely physical structures but institutions that must embody empathy, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to justice. His Lordship underscored that accessibility to justice must not be impeded by geographical barriers and noted that the newly inaugurated District Court Complex at Leh, along with the New Court Complex at Kargil, would substantially bridge this gap.

Noting that more than ninety percent of Ladakh's population belongs to Scheduled Tribes, the Hon'ble Chief Justice lauded the community for preserving the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the region. His Lordship also commended the Indian Army for its commendable dual role in safeguarding the nation's borders and contributing to the socio-economic development of the region through initiatives in education, healthcare, and community welfare.

Highlighting the role of paralegal volunteers, His Lordship emphasised their importance as a bridge between the legal system and the people, particularly in communicating in local languages and understanding cultural contexts. He called for greater outreach through legal aid camps in remote areas and stressed that legal services must extend beyond courtrooms to facilitate access to welfare schemes, pensions, and essential documentation.

The Hon'ble Chief Justice further underlined that the true essence of justice lies in instilling confidence in the legal system among the poorest and most marginalised sections of society. Encouraging the adoption of mediation as an effective dispute resolution mechanism, His Lordship appreciated the traditional practices of the people of Ladakh in resolving disputes amicably through dialogue and urged the Ladakh Legal Services Authority to strengthen mediation frameworks through capacity-building and training initiatives.

On the occasion, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India unveiled the Annual Newsletter 2025 of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority.

During the visit, His Lordship also interacted with participants and visited stalls set up by Self-Help Groups under the Ladakh Rural Livelihood Mission and the Handloom Department, appreciating their efforts in promoting indigenous products and sustainable livelihoods.

Speaking on the occasion, the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, termed the visit of a sitting Chief Justice of India to Ladakh as a historic milestone. He highlighted the unique challenges faced by the region due to its vast geography, remoteness, and demographic diversity, and emphasised the need for collective efforts to strengthen the judicial system. He also apprised the gathering of key initiatives undertaken

by the UT Administration, including the engagement of judicial personnel, deployment of paralegal volunteers, and the organisation of mobile legal aid clinics in remote areas.

The Hon'ble Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli, described the occasion as historic and expressed confidence that the visit of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India would significantly contribute to enhancing legal awareness and empowering tribal communities through improved access to justice. His Lordship also appreciated the leadership of the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor and the continued support of the Indian Army in the development of Ladakh.

Lt. Gen. Hitesh Bhalla, General Officer Commanding, 14 Corps, briefed the gathering on the initiatives undertaken by the Fire and Fury Corps in coordination with the civil administration, highlighting efforts in border management as well as socio-economic development, including education, healthcare, environmental initiatives, and community outreach programmes.

A memento was presented to the dignitaries on behalf of the Ladakh Legal Services Authority.

The programme concluded with the rendition of the National Song and the National Anthem.



