

## **Chief Secretary Dr. Pawan Kotwal addresses Press Briefing on key Issues**

Leh, Oct 04, 2025: The Chief Secretary of Ladakh, Dr. Pawan Kotwal, today addressed a press briefing at the UT Secretariat, Leh, and provided updates on various issues concerning the Union Territory.

Dr. Kotwal informed that out of the 70-youth detained after being misled by certain leaders for their personal and political gains, 30 have already been released. He assured that no innocent misguided youngster will face hardship and the remaining individuals, who are in judicial custody, will be released as per court orders.

The Chief Secretary emphasized that the investigation would clearly establish how some leaders acted in a destructive manner and played with the future of Ladakh.

He highlighted the following key points including that the Government has been actively engaged with Ladakh leaders through formal and informal talks. Even before the scheduled meeting of the High-Powered Committee (HPC) on October 6, preparatory meetings were scheduled to be held on September 25 and 26, 2025.

It is well known that the Government of India has engaged in dialogue process extensively with the Apex Body Leh (ABL) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) through the HPC, its Sub-Committee, and through several informal meetings, the dialogue process which has been fruitful.

The mechanism of dialogue process has yielded significant results, including Raising the Scheduled Tribe (ST) reservation for Ladakh from 45% to 84% (including 4% for LAC reservation who are STs), the rules have been amended to ensure that the unfilled 10% EWS quota goes to general ST candidates in the same recruitment exercise, Providing 1/3 reservation for women in the Councils, Declaring Bhoti and Purgi as official languages of Ladakh and Recruitment of 1385 Non-Gazetted Posts through District Recruitment Boards and the Ladakh Subordinate Services Staff Selection Board, in addition to 3179 Non-Gazetted Posts already filled between 2021 and 2024.

He said that Recruitment for Gazetted Posts has also been initiated by the UPSC. A total of 224 posts (125 Medical Officers, 67 Lecturers, and 32 Accounts Officers) have been advertised. Recruitment for the remaining 156 Gazetted vacancies will be notified in the recruitment year 2026 by the UPSC.

While constructive talks were progressing positively, certain sections attempted to derail the process, misled the public, and continued hunger strikes despite scheduled discussions. This led to the unfortunate law-and-order situation on September 24 and the tragic loss of four lives.

Investigating agencies possess clear evidence regarding these events, and the truth about the firing incidents will also emerge during the investigation.

Dr. Kotwal stressed that the entire episode could have been avoided, had some leaders put Ladakh's interests above personal and political ambitions by calling off the hunger strike when dialogue dates had already been fixed.

He reiterated the Government's commitment to constructive dialogue, protection of Ladakh's land, resources, jobs, and livelihoods, and safeguarding its ecosystem and cultural identity.

Regarding the additional seat in Parliament, he said that the matter of additional parliament seat was discussed in the HPC and that it would be taken up at the time of delimitation, as despite its small population, Ladakh remains a priority for the Government of India.

He said that Ladakh is being developed as a carbon-neutral region. No mining or commercial exploitation of resources is being carried out. All development will be based on community consultation and consent. Allegations of demographic flooding or cultural homogenization are misleading. Ladakh's identity and cultural heritage remain fully protected.

He reiterated that over 3000 Group B & C posts have already been filled in the last three years and that after resolving reservation and domicile issues with ABL and KDA in May 2025, Gazetted recruitment has also been initiated.

He said that all land powers remain with the respective LAHDCs. The CAPEX budget of the LAHDCs has increased five times from ₹50 crore to about ₹750 crore. In 2024–25, LAHDC's CAPEX budget accounted for 30% of total UT Ladakh's capex budget expenditure. Additionally, ₹2410 crore from the total budget of ₹5958 crore was spent on salaries of employees, who are mostly under LAHDC administration.

Dr. Kotwal underscored that the outcomes of HPC meetings should not be undermined, as they have secured the best protections for employment, women's representation, and recognition of local languages.

“The people of Ladakh are known for their peace-loving nature, strong patriotism, and immense contribution to nation-building and safeguarding India's frontiers. The Government has always expressed its desire for open and constructive dialogue and have never avoided any meeting regarding the dialogue. The government remain committed to addressing the aspirations of the people of Ladakh, particularly the younger generation, and will continue to work for the protection of their land, livelihoods, culture, and environment,” Dr. Kotwal concluded.

