

FACT FINDING REPORT ON

LADAKH

Based on the visit to Ladakh by Socialist Party (India), National Alliance of People's Movements and Hum Bharat Ke Log

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Social-political activists extend support to Ladakh's movement



In a demonstration of national solidarity, a delegation of the Socialist Party (India), National Alliance of People's Movements, Hum Bharat ke Log, and including esteemed sociopolitical activists, dedicated researchers and concerned civilians from across the nation, undertook a critical and timely fact-finding visit to Ladakh from September 10 to 14, 2025. This mission, purposefully themed "Understanding Ladakh," was not a mere observational tour but an act of profound solidarity with a grassroots democratic movement fighting for its very survival and identity. The Socialist Party (India), NAPM and Hum Bharat ke Log, representing a significant voice for constitutional morality and social justice in the country, hereby declares its unequivocal and unshakable support for Ladakh's struggle to protect its fragile ecosystem and its unique, ancient cultural identity. This struggle, which has been courageously sustained for over two years through mass protests, strategic shutdowns, and heartbreaking individual sacrifices, centers on the fundamental and non-negotiable demand for the inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, a legal protection that has now become a matter of existential necessity for the people of this high-altitude desert.

The delegation's journey began with important meetings in Srinagar on the morning of September 10. There, they met with two stalwarts of Jammu and Kashmir's political landscape: Dr. Farooq Abdullah, the veteran President of the National Conference, and Yusuf Tarigami, the respected MLA from the CPI(M). In a conversation that was both sobering and illuminating, both leaders expressed their deep and grave concern over the current state of affairs in the country, lamenting the deliberate and systematic diminishing of the Constitution's significance and the judiciary's perplexingly passive stance, which has largely failed to intervene and uphold democratic principles in the face of egregious overreach. A critical consensus emerged from this meeting, one that underscores the interconnected nature of democratic struggles across the region: a widespread, vigorous campaign for the revival of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir must be pursued, primarily from outside the region, to build national pressure. It is absolutely imperative that the entire nation understands how, under the false and manufactured pretext of diluting Articles 370 and abrogating 35A, the most basic democratic rights in J&K, the right to representative government, the right to land, and the right to a distinct identity, have been ruthlessly undermined in what can only be described as a constitutional coup.



The delegation then proceeded on a deliberate and arduous road journey, a choice made not just for acclimatization to the region's harsh, oxygen-thin atmosphere but to physically experience the vast, rugged terrain that defines Ladakhi life. They moved from the relative lushness of Srinagar at 5,200 feet, ascending through the dramatic Zojila Pass to reach Kargil at 8,780 feet on September 10, a town etched in the national memory for the war of 1999. Finally, they moved onward, arriving in Leh at a staggering 11,480 feet on September 11.

It was in Leh that the current political sentiment, forged in the crucible of betrayal, was starkly articulated by Chhering Dorjey Lakaruk, the co-chair of the Leh Apex Body and the head of the influential Ladakh Buddhist Association. He identified the dilution of Article 370 as the primary catalyst for Ladakh's present crisis. He observed with a tragic irony that is lost on no one in the region that while the people of Ladakh once mistakenly considered a Union Territory status necessary for their progress and even celebrated in 2019, they now realize, with absolute and painful clarity, that Article 370 served as an essential protective shield for their land, their resources, their jobs and their very livelihoods. This realization is not an abstract political theory but a daily lived experience of disempowerment.

The profound gravity and human cost of this political miscalculation were made visceral on September 12 during the delegation's visit to the Martyr's Park, now known as Memorial Park, in Leh. There, amidst the stark, beautiful landscape, they witnessed the extraordinary resolve and moral fortitude of Sonam Wangchuk, the globally renowned education reformer, innovator, and environmental activist, founder of the pioneering NGO Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) and a self-supporting institution of higher learning Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL). He, along with fifteen other dedicated friends and activists, was undertaking a 35-day fast, a profound sacrifice undertaken to awaken the nation's conscience. It was only the third day of this arduous undertaking, and the physical toll was already evident. The delegation met with these brave individuals, including Tsering Angchuk, Tsering Tanba, Chhring Mutup, Tsering Namgal, Ama Chocho, Stanzin Chospel, Tashi Dolma, Tsering Lanzes, and Shazia Parveen, a name that signifies the cross-community nature of this struggle. In that solemn park, the delegation extended their full and unwavering support to their cause, a cause that is, in essence, the cause of every Indian who believes in the federal and democratic promise of the Constitution.

The four core demands of this movement are not merely political points for negotiation; they are the essential, non-negotiable pillars for Ladakh's future existence as a distinct cultural and ecological entity.

The movement demands, with undeniable justification rooted in both law and urgent necessity, first, the inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. This is crucial to legally protect its overwhelmingly tribal identity. Almost 99% of the population is classified as Scheduled Tribe and is conscious about protecting its incredibly fragile, high-altitude ecology from predatory commercial exploitation. Second, it demands full statehood for Ladakh to achieve genuine self-governance and democratic agency, moving away from the current colonial-style administration by bureaucrats appointed from Delhi. Third, it requires the immediate establishment of its own Public Service Commission to end the bureaucratic colonization by outsiders and to provide dignified employment opportunities for the highly educated but systematically sidelined local youth. Fourth, it insists on two Lok Sabha seats - one for Kargil and another for Leh - to ensure adequate and meaningful political representation for this vast, geographically challenging, and culturally distinct region, which is currently, forced to make do with a lone voice in the lower house of Indian Parliament, with no provision for representation in the upper house.

The context for these demands is one of profound betrayal and existential threat. Since the unilateral dilution of Article 370 and the revocation of Article 35A in 2019, the floodgates have been opened. The rich natural resources of Ladakh, from its pristine glaciers and water bodies to its vast mineral deposits of granite, limestone and even uranium have been thrown open to rampant exploitation by outside commercial interests, with local communities having little to no say in the process. The unique cultural identity of Ladakh, which is itself remarkably diverse with its Buddhist and Muslim populations coexisting for centuries, is now under direct and immediate threat from demographic change and cultural homogenization. Ladakh, as an integral part of the fragile trans-Himalayan ecosystem already bearing the brunt of the global climate crisis, requires the environmental safeguards of the Sixth Schedule with utmost urgency. This demand is not a new or radical one; the Bharatiya Janata Party itself had recognized its legitimacy and had included this very promise as the third item in its 2019 Lok Sabha election manifesto for Ladakh and had publicly reiterated it during the 2020 Autonomous Hill Development Council elections. The BJP has now, in an act of profound bad faith and political duplicity, brazenly gone back on this solemn promise, leaving the people of Ladakh feeling cheated and abandoned by the very state they are an integral part of.



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The consequences of this betrayal are not theoretical; they are already being felt in the most damaging and tangible ways. The most critical decisions about the allocation of Ladakh's vast natural resources are now taken by authorities sitting in distant, air-conditioned offices in Delhi and Jammu, completely disconnected from the region's ecological sensitivities and socio-cultural realities. While the region nominally has two Autonomous Hill Development Councils, one each for Leh and Kargil, these are hollow institutions, possessing no real autonomy or legislative power. They are consistently overruled, superseded, and rendered impotent by the appointees of the Union government, the Lieutenant Governor, and senior bureaucrats who report to the Home Ministry. This financial stranglehold is explicit and shocking: out of the Rs. 6,000 crore annual budget for Ladakh, the democratically elected LAHDCs are permitted to spend a paltry Rs. 600 crores, a mere ten percent. The rest, a colossal ninety percent, is controlled and spent at the discretion of the LG and his cabal of unelected officials. This is not autonomy; this is a textbook example of colonial-style administration, where the natives are allowed a semblance of power while the real control rests with a distant governor.

Hence, the demand for full statehood is not a mere political aspiration; it is an absolute necessity for democratic survival. Ladakh must have its own fully empowered Legislative Assembly, with the power to make laws on subjects in the State List, but this Assembly must be truly empowered and must not remain subservient to the Lieutenant Governor, as is the tragically undemocratic and humiliating spectacle currently unfolding in Jammu and Kashmir. Full statehood must be restored immediately to end the systemic humiliation of elected representatives, a scenario where a Chief Minister can be placed under house arrest and a MLA can be arbitrarily arrested on flimsy pretexts. An empowered Assembly, accountable to its people, is required in both Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, and this can only happen if full statehood is granted.

The systematic sidelining of locals is further evidenced by the chilling fact that there have been no new appointments at Gazetted posts for the past six years in Ladakh. The entire upper echelon of the administration is composed of bureaucrats from outside, who often treat their posting as a punishment, making the establishment of a Ladakh Public Service Commission an urgent and non-negotiable demand for administrative justice and self-determination.

The high-handed, cynical, and utterly condemnable manner in which the Union Government is treating the largely peaceful and deeply democratic movement in Ladakh reveals a strategy of deliberate obstruction and intimidation. The government has consistently failed to implement what was agreed upon in multiple formal meetings, such as the already promised reservation system in recruitment for government jobs, a key demand to secure the economic future of Ladakhi youth. In recent negotiations the Union government had agreed to implement a reservation policy for jobs with 80% for ST, 4% for people living along Line of Actual Control, 1% for SC, 10% for EWS, remaining 5% is for domicile of Ladakh. In Ladakh it has been decided that a non-Ladakhi must stay continuously in Ladakh for 15 years from 31 October, 2019 to become eligible for domicile. Demand was to keep 1989 as cut off year when 8 tribes were recognized. Government finally agreed for 15 years. Regarding seats for parliament government says there is a freeze on parliamentary seats till 2026 but they have done delimitation for J&K for both parliamentary as well as state assembly seats. It employs deliberate delaying tactics, forming endless sub-committees and holding fruitless rounds of dialogue, while actively attempting to drive a wedge through the movement along vexatious religious and ethnic lines. Most egregiously, it has engaged in a series of vindictive and punitive actions against the iconic activist Sonam Wangchuk, a man whose international stature stems from his work in education and ecology. The government is now treating Sonam Wangchuk not as a constructive critic but as a political enemy, canceling the lease of his HIAL, a world-class institution of alternative pedagogy, and deploying the full might of the Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement Directorate to carry out politically motivated investigations into his organizations' funding. This is a blatant attempt to criminalize dissent and silence the most powerful, credible, and unifying voice of the Ladakhi movement.

Sonam Wangchuk has, at great personal risk, heroically highlighted the devastating environmental and social implications of the proposed 40,000-acre solar park at Skyangchuthang, also known as Pang. This massive industrial project, which the government plans to construct on traditional pasture land, is absolutely vital for the survival of the Changpa nomadic pastoralist tribe. The Changpa have lived in this region for generations, developing a symbiotic relationship with the land, raising the world-renowned Pashmina goats, yaks and sheep.







The destruction of these pristine pastures would not only irrevocably destroy their ancient grazing grounds and drastically reduce the health, yield and quality of the Pashmina goats, but it would also effectively annihilate the tribe's entire traditional way of life, a unique cultural heritage that has adapted to one of the most extreme environments on the planet. Furthermore, the construction phase alone is expected to bring a massive influx of thousands of outside workers, placing unbearable pressure on the fragile trans-Himalayan ecosystem, which already faces severe, existential challenges due to critically limited water resources, brutally harsh climatic conditions and the escalating global climate crisis that is melting the region's glaciers at an alarming rate. This project, touted as "green energy," represents a direct and catastrophic assault on the delicate, centuries-old balance between humans, animals, and the land in Ladakh.

Chhering Dorjey, the co-chair of the Leh Apex Body and a former minister, powerfully articulated the profound strategic and security folly of the government's confrontational approach. He emphasized the indispensable, yet officially unacknowledged, role of people in border villages in the nation's defense architecture. He stated poignantly that while people living in the metropolitan comfort of Delhi and Mumbai may watch conflicts on television from a safe distance, for people living in the harsh, unforgiving border areas of Ladakh, there is no choice but to be directly involved and invested in the nation's security. They are the ones who carry luggage for soldiers across impossible mountain passes, bring them food and supplies when official supply lines are cut off, and sit on vigil with them through the freezing, lonely nights, merely to offer them human company and local knowledge. These communities are the unsung, unpaid sentinels of the nation. If the government, through its policies of alienation and disempowerment, makes these very people, the first and most vital line of India's territorial defense, unhappy, resentful, and alienated, how can it possibly expect to receive the unwavering, spontaneous support they have so naturally and patriotically provided for generations? This is a question of national security that the mandarins in Indian establishment have dangerously ignored.

The unity of the movement, bridging the historical and geographical divide between the Buddhist-majority Leh and the Shia-Muslim-majority Kargil, is its greatest and most powerful strength. The movement is being coordinated with impressive discipline and strategic foresight by the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance.

It is particularly noteworthy that in a powerful and unprecedented display of inter-community solidarity, the Shia Muslims in Kargil recently voluntarily ended a bitter, 42-year-old dispute by formally donating a piece of land for the construction of a Buddhist monastery. This magnanimous act underscores the profound commitment across communities to preserve and strengthen Buddhist-Muslim unity against all unholy attempts by the central government to divide them along communal lines. The LAB, formed in 2020, is a broad spectrum that includes representation from all significant social, religious, and political organizations in Leh, with the notable exception of the ruling BJP, and is ably chaired by the former MP Thupstan Chhewang. The KDA, formed in 2021 in response to the felt sense of political disempowerment, is equally representative of Kargil's diverse socio-political spectrum. The two organizations hold disciplined monthly coordination meetings to strategize and present a united front, demonstrating excellent political coordination for their common, existential purpose. Sajjad Kargili, a dynamic core committee member of the KDA, played a pivotal role in facilitating the delegation's visit and has emerged as one of the movement's most visible, articulate, and effective faces on the national stage.

A conclusive and wide-ranging meeting of the visiting delegation was held on September 14, 2025, in Kargil, organized by the Kargil Democratic Alliance and attended by a broad spectrum of political and religious leaders, reflecting the movement's depth. Asghar Ali Karbalai, the Co-Chair of the KDA, detailed the history of the movement, explaining how the KDA was formed after the widespread observance of a black day on August 5, 2020, the first anniversary of the abrogation, and how the coherent four-point agenda was formally agreed upon with the LAB in 2021. He and others, including the local MP Hanifa Jan, highlighted the systematic disempowerment of Ladakh is in their own land. Hanifa Jan stated with compelling clarity that Ladakh has been unceremoniously moved from a democratic setup to a suffocating bureaucratic one, and that the fundamental principle of self-determination dictates that the people of Ladakh alone should decide the nature, pace, and philosophy of development in their ecologically sensitive homeland.

The concerns raised in these meetings are not abstract; they are concrete, severe, and impact daily life. In the education sector, for instance, a shocking case was revealed: out of 80 contract lecturer posts recently filled at the University of Ladakh, 78 were given to outsiders from the plains, blatantly bypassing highly qualified local Ph.D. holders, including a scholar from Banaras Hindu University and another from Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti University in Lucknow.





The agreed-upon reservation policy, painstakingly negotiated with the Union government, is being brazenly ignored on the ground. In the economic sphere, outside contractors from Srinagar, Jammu, and Chandigarh, with better connections to the bureaucracy, have systematically taken over the local market, marginalizing Ladakhi businesses.
Furthermore, the current top administrative triumvirate the Lieutenant Governor, the Director General of Police, and the Chief Secretary are all from Jammu, leading to a clear and widely perceived bias in recruitment, contract allocation, and policy implementation that consistently favors their home region at the expense of Ladakh. It is notable that one of the arguments in favour of formation of separate UT for Ladakh was to free it from the subordination of J&K.

When government representatives, in a patronizing tone, questioned how a full statehood Ladakh would manage its financial resources, the KDA-LAB response was sharp, logical, and grounded in reality. They asserted that all funds currently allocated to the Union Territory by the Finance Commission should be transferred to the state government. They pointed out the powerful example of the Kingdom of Bhutan, a sovereign nation that functions primarily on the revenue generated from just two major hydroelectric projects, highlighting the absolute viability of a properly empowered and fiscally responsible Ladakh. The government's predictable response to form yet another inter-ministerial subcommittee to "examine the issue" is seen by all in Ladakh as nothing more than another cynical delaying tactic, designed to run down the clock and break the spirit of the movement.
A recent and deeply alarming development, which has sent shockwaves through the region, is the announcement of the creation of five new districts- Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zanskar, and Drass. While superficially presented as a benign administrative reform for better governance, local people from all walks of life universally and vehemently view this as a strategic, pre-meditated move to gerrymander the region, promote corporate access to resources, and, most insidiously, alter the region's demographics through subsequent delimitation exercises. In Changthang, for example, the planned massive solar parks and extensive mining projects would inevitably bring in tens of thousands of outside workers, who would eventually acquire domicile status, fundamentally and permanently changing the demographic profile and political representation of the region. This is seen, with very good reason, as a form of "demographic flooding" and "cultural genocide," a systematic process that would ultimately undermine the native identity, traditions, and livelihoods and permanently dilute the demand for Sixth Schedule protection, which is predicated on the area having a distinct tribal population.

Violent Protest and the Arrest of Sonam Wangchuk and Others

The situation has now escalated to a critical, tragic, and bloody juncture, marking a dark new chapter in the movement. On September 24, 2025, what began as a peaceful protest in Leh demanding statehood and Sixth Schedule protections turned violently deadly, resulting in four civilian deaths and dozens injured after security forces opened fire. The victims were young men in the prime of their lives: Jigmet Dorjey (25), Rinchen Dorjey, Stanzin Namgal (24), and perhaps most symbolically powerful, Tsewang Tharchin (46), an ex-serviceman who had served the nation with distinction in the Indian Army during the 1999 Kargil War. His death and the deaths of the others, have instantly become a powerful and haunting symbol of sacrifice for the movement, embodying the ultimate price paid for demanding constitutional rights. The security forces broke the glasses of all vehicles parked in the Memorial Park and things were stolen from inside these vehicles. In a blatant act of repression intended to decapitate the movement, just two days later, on September 26, 2025, the prominent activist Sonam Wangchuk was arrested under the draconian National Security Act (NSA), which permits preventive detention for up to a year without trial, and was swiftly shifted to the high-security Jodhpur Central Jail in Rajasthan, a distance of over 1000 kilometers from his home, in a clear tactic to isolate him and silence his voice. In a coordinated attack, his NGO, the SECMOL, had its FCRA license revoked, crippling its funding. The allegation of a Pakistani connection is the most absurd charge against Sonam Wangchuk. These actions have been widely condemned across the political spectrum and by civil society as a severe authoritarian overreach aimed at crushing a peaceful democratic movement by targeting its most respected leader. Following the violence, authorities launched a widespread crackdown, arresting between 44 and over 60 individuals, including elected Leh Apex Body councillors, under severe charges like the NSA, PSA, and new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) provisions, as a harsh, indefinite curfew and a complete mobile internet suspension were imposed on the region, creating an information blackout and a state of siege.

The delegation now also demands unconditional immediate release of Sonam Wangchuk and all others who are illegally detained and a judicial enquiry into the violence of 24 September which took four lives and left 87 people injured, 15 of them critically.





The delegation that visited Leh to extend support in this critical, heartbreaking hour included Sandeep Pandey, Guddi S.L., Soumya Dutta, Shahid Saleem, Manimala, Arundhati Dhuru, Meera Sanghmitra, A. Malathi, Sarbjit Singh, Dr. Poornima Bisineer, Ganga, Mayuri, Mahesh, Dr. Gunjan Singh, Kunal Gadhalay, and Sumeera Bhat. They represented a truly national coalition of conscience, hailing from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Delhi, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir itself. Their presence was a powerful message that the struggle of Ladakh is not an isolated regional issue but a national test of India's democratic and constitutional integrity.

This expanded report stands as a testament to their solidarity and a forceful, detailed indictment of the injustices being perpetrated in the high Himalayas. The demands of the people of Ladakh are just, necessary, constitutionally sound, and profoundly urgent. Their fight is a fight for ecological survival, for cultural dignity, and for the very democratic and federal rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India, the same Constitution the current Union Government so frequently invokes yet so brazenly undermines in its actions. The time for empty committees and broken promises is over. The time for justice, for inclusion in the Sixth Schedule, and for full statehood is now.

With this report, we are formally annexing the comprehensive lists of the deceased and the injured, which document the grave human cost of the state violence unleashed in Leh on September 24, 2025. These lists are attached as an integral part of this document and stand as a solemn testament to the ultimate sacrifice made by civilians in their peaceful struggle for constitutional rights and dignity.

On October 1, 2025, a Ladakh Buddhist Association member was found dead in Leh in an apparent suicide, leaving behind his wife and two children. The LBA linked his death to distress over climate activist Sonam Wangchuk’s arrest. This news reached to us as our press release was going to print, emphasizing the urgent need to address Ladakh’s growing socio-political tensions.

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