Centre's draft for Ladakh: a directly elected body, with the Lieutenant Governor keeping the final say on laws

Polity · 21 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/21



News

A draft framework for Ladakh's governance prepared by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was given to the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) at a sub-committee meeting in Leh on 15 Oct 2026. It proposes a directly elected UT-level body, but, according to LAB and KDA, substantial powers stay concentrated with the Lieutenant Governor's administration – in effect, the LG keeps the final say. It is to be done in two stages: a constitutional amendment (a new Article 371-K), followed by a regulation under Article 240. As it has no legislature, LAB and KDA rejected it as an old 'NEFA'-type model. The next round of talks is on 22 Oct in New Delhi.

Key facts

Draft	MHA; sub-committee meeting in Leh, 15 Oct 2026; shared 16 Oct
Proposal	Directly elected UT body; substantial powers with LG administration
Route	Constitutional amendment (Art 371-K) → regulation under Art 240
Talks with	Leh Apex Body (LAB), Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)
Demands	Legislature, statehood, Sixth Schedule, Art 371 safeguards
Next round	22 Oct 2026, New Delhi

Background

- Constitution: Part VIII (Arts 239–242) deals with UTs. Art 239 – UTs are administered by the President through an administrator. Art 240 – the President may make regulations for the 'peace, progress and good government' of certain UTs, with the force of an Act of Parliament (A&N Islands, Lakshadweep, DNH–Daman & Diu, Puducherry). In June 2025, regulations on reservation and official languages for Ladakh were issued under Art 240.
- Ladakh basics: under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, it became a UT without a legislature on 31 Oct 2019 (after Art 370 was revoked). Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC) – Leh 1995, Kargil 2003; 30 members each (26 elected, 4 nominated). June 2025 regulations – total reservation in government jobs up to 85% (EWS 10% separate); official languages English, Hindi, Urdu, Bhoti, Purgi; one-third of LAHDC seats for women.
- Background: LAB/KDA demands – statehood, the Sixth Schedule (Art 244(2); tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram), a separate public service commission, and separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil. After the Sept 2025 violence in Leh, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was detained under the National Security Act; the order was revoked in March 2026. LAB/KDA say a 22 May 2026 meeting agreed on a 'UT with a legislature'; on 9 Sept 2026 the MHA floated a new Art 371(K).

Tamil Nadu link: neighbouring UT Puducherry has a legislature under Art 239A (14th Amendment, 1962); while that legislature functions, the President cannot make regulations for it under Art 240. Delhi has Art 239AA (69th Amendment, 1991). Ladakh has no legislature.

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