Follow us on : Facebook | https://www.facebook.com/opensearch.co.in Twitter | @OPENSEARCH2 Youtube | open search E-mail | Opensearchenglish@gmail.com

OPEN SEARCH

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY | PUBLISHED FROM DELHI, GOA, CHHATTISGARH, HARYANA, CHANDIGARH & JHARKHAND

Contact for Advertisement 9958699302

E-mail opensearchnews@gmail.com

Website www.opensearch.co.in

YEAR : 11 ISSUE : 254 NEW DELHI, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER, 28, 2026 ` 1/- Pages- 8 RNI No. DELENG/2016/67075

DELHI EDITION

Cabinet approves 50 percent increase in Lok Sabha Seats

Cabinet revises delimitation formula, proposes 50% Lok Sabha Expansion, protecting States' share until 2051

NEW DELHI.AGENCY



The union Cabinet on Friday approved a revised constitutional amendment framework for delimitation and the implementation of women's reservation, proposing a uniform 50 per cent increase in the strength of the Lok Sabha across all states while retaining their existing relative share of parliamentary representation until 2051.

The significant revision in the government's approach is aimed at addressing concerns raised by southern states and regional parties over the potential impact of delimitation on the federal balance, as the government prepares for Parliament's special sitting beginning November 30. Under the revised formula, the strength of the Lok Sabha, which currently has 543 elected members, is proposed to increase to approximately 816, within an overall ceiling of 850 seats. Every state would receive an identical 50 percent increase in its existing allocation of parliamentary seats, ensuring that no state loses its relative share of representation to another because of differences in population growth. For instance, Tamil Nadu, which currently has 39 Lok Sabha seats, would see its representation increase to 59. Other states would receive additional seats in the same proportion to their existing strength.

The arrangement is intended to ensure that states, particularly in southern India, which have successfully implemented population stabilisation programmes, are not penalised through a relative decline in their parliamentary representation. One of the most significant features of the revised proposal is the extension of the freeze on the inter-state distribution of Lok Sabha seats until 2051, retaining the existing proportions based on the 1971 Census. This addresses one of the principal objections raised by the Opposition during the government's earlier attempt to push through the delimitation legislation in April. The revised framework, however, provides for the redrawing of individual parliamentary constituencies within each state on the basis of the 2011 Census. This would enable the delimitation exercise to take account of changes in population distribution and correct disparities in constituency sizes without disturbing the relative share of parliamentary representation between states.

Delimitation Bill : Modi Government eyes fresh numbers as INDIA Bloc faces crucial unity test

The Narendra Modi government is preparing for another major legislative test as Parliament reconvenes for a four-day special sitting beginning Monday, November 30, with the proposed constitutional amendment on delimitation once again emerging as the centrepiece of an intense political confrontation.

Having suffered a setback in April when it failed to secure the constitutionally mandated two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, the government is now exploring the possibility of mobilising support beyond the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to revive the legislation and push it through Parliament. The impending confrontation, however, is not merely a test of the government's ability to overcome its earlier defeat. It could also prove to be a decisive examination of the cohesion of the Opposition's INDIA bloc, with indications that some of its constituents, particularly the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP), may not necessarily adopt the same position as the Congress on the proposed legislation.

An intriguing indication of the emerging political calculations came from Congress MP Karti P Chidambaram, who, shortly after the announcement of the special sitting, posted on X: "Guess the BJP government has got its ducks in a row!"

CM Pramod Sawant launches book on Goa's Traditions of Mother Goddess Worship

PANAJI.OPEN SEARCH



Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant has released Worship of Mother Goddesses of Goa, a book authored by Dr Rohit R. Phalgaonkar and supported by the Vardhani Fellowship of the World Konkani Centre, Mangaluru.

The publication explores Goa's rich and diverse traditions of Mother Goddess worship, drawing on archaeological evidence, Murti Shastra (iconography), folklore and community histories to document the region's religious and cultural heritage. Speaking at the launch, Sawant emphasised the importance of preserving Goa's cultural legacy and highlighted the government's efforts towards safeguarding the state's heritage.

He reiterated the government's commitment through initiatives such as the Goa State Heritage Policy, State Mission for Manuscripts, museums and archives. He also referred to the proposed Kotiteerth Corridor at Divar as part of the broader efforts to conserve and promote Goa's cultural and historical heritage.

Gadkari announces Hydrogen-powered vehicle trials on 10 Highways, 100 Biofuel projects in Vidarbha

NAGPUR.AGENCY



union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Friday announced that pilot projects involving hydrogen-powered vehicles would be launched on 10 highways across the country as part of efforts to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels. Speaking at the inauguration of the Agrovision agricultural exhibition here, Gadkari said discussions were underway with automobile manufacturers, including Tata and Mahindra, to introduce hydrogen-powered tractors, buses and other vehicles on the identified highways. He said the initiative aims to explore hydrogen as an alternative fuel and reduce the country's substantial expenditure on importing petrol and diesel.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini unveils mascot of 'Khel Mahakumbh Haryana-2026

VIJAY KUMAR.OPEN SEARCH



CHANDIGARH : Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini on Friday unveiled the mascot of 'Khel Mahakumbh Haryana-2026'. Inspired by the blackbuck, the state animal of Haryana, the mascot symbolises the state's identity and cultural heritage, as well as the agility, alertness, balance and unwavering commitment of Haryana's sportspersons towards their goals.

On the occasion, former Indian hockey captain Sardar Singh, Asian Games medallist Parveen Hooda and boxer Narender were also felicitated. The Chief Minister extended his best wishes to the members of the junior hockey team travelling to Egypt.

Addressing the sportspersons, Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that the passion and enthusiasm of Haryana's sportspersons are the state's greatest strength. It is a matter of pride that Haryana consistently figures at the top of medal tallies. Congratulating the sportspersons, he said that the Khel Mahakumbh would provide them with a major platform to hone their talent and bring laurels to the state. The Chief Minister said that the blackbuck is known for its remarkable speed, agility, alertness, balance and grace. These very qualities are reflected in Haryana's sportspersons. When they enter the sporting arena, they demonstrate the agility, concentration and ability to achieve their targets that characterise the blackbuck. Through the mascot, a message of environmental conservation, sensitivity towards wildlife and preservation of natural heritage is also being conveyed to the youth and the people of the state. The Chief Minister said that 18,000 sportspersons would showcase their talent, skills and sporting spirit across 30 sports disciplines during the state-level competitions of the Khel Mahakumbh. The competitions will be organised in two phases across 11 cities of the state. He extended his best wishes to the Sports Department, administrative officers and everyone associated with the event for its successful conduct. Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that the Khel Mahakumbh is a visionary initiative of the State Government aimed at providing appropriate opportunities, guidance and modern facilities to budding sporting talent in villages, towns and small cities. These young talents have the potential to bring glory to the Tricolour at the Olympic Games, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games in the future.

As per the annual sports calendar, activities under the Khel Mahakumbh commenced on November 16, and district-level selection trials were conducted across the state ahead of the state-level competitions. The enthusiastic participation of youth in these trials reflects the emerging sporting culture in Haryana.

He said that sports not only promote physical fitness and mental concentration but also keep youth away from social evils such as drug abuse, while inculcating discipline, teamwork, leadership qualities and the ability to accept victory and defeat with equanimity. Investment in sports is an investment in the state's bright future and the creation of a healthy society.

18,000 Sportspersons to Showcase Their Talent in 30 Sports Disciplines, Competitions to Be Held Across 11 Cities

The Chief Minister said that several significant steps have been taken over the past 12 years to strengthen sports infrastructure in Haryana. From providing government jobs to outstanding sportspersons to expanding sports academies, sports nurseries, training facilities and modern sporting infrastructure, sustained efforts have been made in this direction. Under the Haryana Outstanding Sportspersons Recruitment Rules, 260 outstanding sportspersons have so far been provided Group A, B and C government jobs. He said that sportspersons winning medals at international competitions, including the Olympic Games, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, are awarded cash prizes of up to Rs 6 crore. Over the past 12 years, 17,676 sportspersons of the state have been awarded cash prizes amounting to Rs 931 crore. Advance financial assistance is also provided to sportspersons representing the country in international competitions to support their preparations.

The Chief Minister said that provision has been made for a monthly scholarship of Rs 1,500 for sportspersons in the age group of 8 to 14 years and Rs 2,000 for those in the age group of 15 to 19 years. The Sports Gradation Policy has also been amended to extend the benefit of sports gradation to sportspersons participating in the Haryana State Games, enabling them to access government employment and other opportunities. He said that recipients of the Khel Ratna, Dronacharya, Arjuna, Dhyan Chand and Tenzing Norgay Awards are now being provided a monthly honorarium of Rs 20,000, while Bhim Award recipients are receiving a monthly honorarium of Rs 5,000.

CM honours youth olympic gold medallist boxer Gunjan with Rs 1 crore cash award



CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH

Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini on Friday honoured promising boxer Gunjan, a resident of Dhana Kalan village in Hansi, with a cash award of Rs 1 crore at his official residence, Sant Kabir Kutir, in Chandigarh.

Gunjan has brought laurels to the state and the country by winning a gold medal in the 48 kg weight category in boxing at the Youth Olympic Games 2026 held in Dakar, Senegal. Earlier, she had also delivered outstanding performances, winning silver medals at the 2026 U-19 Asian Boxing Championships in Jakarta, Indonesia, and the 2026 World Boxing Futures Cup in Bangkok, Thailand. Lauding Gunjan's exceptional talent, discipline and perseverance, Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that by achieving golden success on the international stage, this daughter from rural Haryana has once again demonstrated that the daughters of the state are second to none in any field. He said that Gunjan's achievement is a great source of inspiration for other youth and sportspersons of the state.

Highlighting Haryana's sports policy, the Chief Minister said that the State Government's transparent and sportsperson-friendly policy has transformed Haryana into a sporting powerhouse of the country. Sportspersons are being provided modern facilities, quality training and access to sports nurseries from the grassroots level.

High Court to hear plea challenging SC certificate norms for Chandigarh MC election

CHANDIGARH : (AGENCY)

The Punjab and Haryana High Court will hear on July 30, 2026, a petition challenging the norms issued by the State Election Commission, making it mandatory for candidates contesting from SC-reserved seats to possess an SC certificate issued by Chandigarh.

Two aspirants for tickets from wards reserved for the SCs have approached the Punjab and Haryana High Court through advocates Rajiv Sharma and Karanbir Singh. The advocates mentioned the petition before the high court, requesting the division bench to list the matter urgently. The bench of Justice Deepak Sibal and Justice Sunish Bindlish allowed the prayer and fixed the matter for July 30 for arguments.

Mamta Dogra, resident of Dadumajra, and Meenu, in the petition, said they belong to a Scheduled Caste and have SC certificates issued by other states. The same castes are specified as SCs for the Union Territory of Chandigarh at entry No. 9. They said Section 2(52) of the Punjab Municipal Corporation Act, 1976, as extended to Chandigarh, defines "Scheduled Caste" simply as any of the castes specified in Part II of the said Order.

Four killed in Rohtak firing, BJP Government must answer for Haryana's law and order : Selja

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH



The Sirsa MP, Former Union Cabinet Minister, General Secretary of All India Congress Committee, Congress Working Committee (CWC) member and Uttarakhand Congress in-charge Kumari Selja expressed deep grief over the killing of four people in a firing incident at a dhaba in Rohtak. Conveying her condolences to the families of the deceased, she said the incident had once again exposed the deteriorating law and order situation in Haryana.

Kumari Selja said incidents of murder, extortion and firing were being reported frequently across the state. The audacity of criminals was increasing, while ordinary citizens were worried about their safety. She questioned why the BJP government was not taking concrete steps despite such incidents occurring repeatedly. She asked what condition the government had brought Haryana to, where people were concerned about their safety even in public places. She said the police must act immediately when traders and shopkeepers receive extortion threats.

The government should disclose how many cases involving such complaints had been acted upon and what arrangements had been made to protect victims after they received threats. She said prompt action on complaints and security for affected families were the government's responsibility.

Kumari Selja demanded that the investigation into the Rohtak incident be completed swiftly and the attackers arrested at the earliest. She also sought appropriate assistance for the families of the deceased. She said the BJP government had failed to provide security to the people of the state. She urged the Chief Minister to review the law and order situation and publicly explain the steps being taken to curb incidents of murder, extortion and firing.

Briefs News

Applications Invited for State-Level Energy Conservation Awards (SLECA-2026)

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH. The Haryana Department of New and Renewable Energy and the Haryana Renewable Energy Development Agency (HAREDA) will confer the State-Level Energy Conservation Awards (SLECA-2026) to recognise and encourage outstanding efforts in the field of energy conservation during 2025-26. Sharing information in this regard, a spokesperson of the department said that the awards will be presented in various prescribed categories to promote energy efficiency and sustainable energy use across the state, with prize money of up to Rs 2 lakh. The spokesperson further said that applications have been invited in various categories, including industries, including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); commercial, government and institutional buildings and group housing societies; innovation, new technology and Research and Development (R&D) projects; best energy auditing; firms or agencies implementing green building practices and the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC); and substations of power distribution companies (DISCOMs). Interested applicants are required to submit their applications online through the official portal https://app.haredasleca.in. The last date for submission of online applications is December 23, 2026.

Chairman of Haryana Public Enterprises Bureau, Mohan Lal Badoli, visits Haryana Pavilion

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH Chairman of the Haryana Public Enterprises Bureau, Sh. Mohan Lal Badoli, visited the Haryana Pavilion at the International Trade Fair being held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on Friday. During his visit, he toured various stalls and interacted with entrepreneurs to learn about the products, artworks and handicrafts on display. He also appreciated the design of the Haryana Pavilion. Sh. Badoli said that the way Haryana has been showcased at the International Trade Fair is highly commendable. The pavilion not only presents the state's journey of development but also offers a glimpse into its rich cultural heritage. He said that Haryana has emerged as an export hub, and the pavilion showcases the wide variety of products exported from the state, reflecting its industrial and commercial potential. He said that Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi's vision is that those possessing traditional skills and craftsmanship are truly self-reliant. In line with the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Haryana is also progressing steadily towards becoming a self-reliant state. He added that the contribution of the state's artisans and skilled people plays a significant role in realising this vision. Various stalls showcasing their work have been set up at the pavilion.

Haryana issues transfer and posting orders of one IAS, six HCS officers

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH. The Haryana government on Friday issued transfer and posting orders of one Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer and six Haryana Civil Service (HCS) officers with immediate effect. IAS officer Nikhil Gajraj, Director General, State Transport, Haryana, has been given the additional charge of Secretary, Haryana Human Rights Commission. Among the HCS officers, Nishu Nee Namrata Singhal, who was awaiting posting orders, has been appointed Additional Transport Commissioner, Haryana, and Additional Transport Commissioner (Road Safety). Belina, Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Hodal, has been entrusted with the additional charge of Managing Director, Cooperative Sugar Mill, Palwal. Rahul Mittal, General Manager, Haryana Roadways, Hisar, has been posted as Managing Director, Cooperative Sugar Mill, Panipat. Suresh Ravesh, Joint Transport Commissioner, Haryana, has been appointed Managing Director, Cooperative Sugar Mill, Jind.

Providing Better and Modern Healthcare Facilities Close to People's Homes State Govt's Top Priority : Rao

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH



Haryana Health Minister, Ms. Arti Singh Rao said that providing better and modern healthcare facilities to every citizen close to their homes is the top priority of the State Government. Strengthening Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Sub-Health Centres (SHCs) and Block Public Health Units (BPHUs) in rural and semi-urban areas will further strengthen the healthcare security network for the people. The Health Minister said that an additional amount of Rs 170.32 lakh has been approved, taking into account the revised requirements for the construction of Primary Health Centres at Popra, Uplana and Jalmana in Karnal district, a Sub-Health Centre at Chamrori and a Block Public Health Unit at Pratap Nagar in Yamunanagar district, to expedite the execution of these projects.

She directed the officers to pay special attention to the quality and timely completion of all construction works so that residents of the respective areas can avail themselves of the benefits of these healthcare facilities at the earliest. Sharing further information in this regard, a spokesperson of the department said that the revised rough cost estimates had been received from the Civil Surgeons of the districts concerned. These estimates were prepared by the Executive Engineers of the respective Zila Parishads, taking into account site-specific requirements and revised cost assessments. Giving details, the spokesperson said that against the earlier administrative approval of Rs 55.50 lakh for the construction of SHC Chamrori in Yamunanagar district, the revised cost has been estimated at Rs 88.71 lakh, requiring an additional approval of Rs 33.21 lakh. Similarly, the revised cost of the BPHU at CHC Pratap Nagar in Yamunanagar district has been estimated at Rs 55.85 lakh against the earlier administrative approval of Rs 50.00 lakh, necessitating an additional allocation of Rs 5.85 lakh. In Karnal district, the revised construction cost of PHC Popra has been estimated at Rs 467.01 lakh.

Additional Rs 170.32 Lakh Approved for Construction of Healthcare Facilities in Karnal and Yamunanagar Districts

Chandigarh blackout mock drill today, here's all you need to know

CHANDIGARH : (AGENCY)

The Chandigarh Administration will conduct a Civil Defence Mock Exercise (Blackout) across the city today, November 27, at 7 pm to assess its preparedness and emergency response mechanisms. As part of the exercise, air raid sirens will sound at all 35 identified locations across the city.According to the schedule released by the Administration, the exercise will begin with a high-low pitch siren lasting two minutes.

This will be followed by a 20-minute mock exercise, during which various departments will perform their assigned duties in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The exercise will conclude with a two-minute high-pitch siren. The Administration has appealed to residents to participate in the exercise and cooperate with officials on duty. Citizens have been advised to remain calm and not panic on hearing the sirens, cooperate with officials and follow the directions issued by the Administration. Officials said the mock drill aims to assess inter-departmental coordination, response time and public awareness during an emergency.

Haryana has emerged as a hub for sports, athletes from the state are making their mark at both national and international levels : Gaurav

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH



Haryana Minister of State for Sports, Shri Gaurav Gautam, said that Haryana has emerged as a hub of sports, with athletes from the state making their mark at national and international levels. The state government is continuously working to provide better sports facilities, modern training and incentives to athletes. He urged sportspersons to make discipline, hard work and sportsmanship an integral part of their lives and to participate in sports with complete honesty and dedication. The Minister of State for Sports was speaking at the inauguration of the Annual Mega Gala 5.0 Sports Competition at Motilal Public School in Jind on Friday. The three-day sports competition was inaugurated by Shri Gaurav Gautam by lighting the ceremonial torch. Extending his best wishes to the participants, he said that sports hold great importance alongside education in life. Sports not only keep individuals physically and mentally healthy but also develop self-confidence, discipline, leadership qualities and team spirit. Young people associated with sports remain away from social evils such as drug abuse and move towards their goals with a positive outlook.

The Minister of State for Sports was speaking at the inauguration of the Annual Mega Gala 5.0 Sports Competition at Motilal Public School in Jind on Friday

Encouraging the participants, the Sports Minister said that he was confident that today's young athletes would bring laurels to the country and the state through their hard work, dedication and talent. The success of a sportsperson is not merely an individual achievement; it also enhances the pride of their family, village, region and the entire state. He said that every sportsperson should always uphold the spirit of patriotism and nationalism. When an athlete enters the playing field, they represent not only their talent but also the country. Therefore, sportspersons should move forward by giving the highest priority to sportsmanship, discipline and dedication towards the nation.

On the occasion, the Sports Minister also symbolically played badminton and tried his hand at shooting to motivate the participants. The three-day competition being organised at Motilal Public School will feature events in Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Badminton, Table Tennis, Carrom.

CM Rekha launches Amrita SREE SHG programme at Brahmasthanam Mahotsav

NEW DELHI. OPEN SEARCH



Chief minister Rekha Gupta Thursday launched the Amrita Shree Self-Help Group Programme at Brahmasthanam Mahotsav, highlighting the role of women's economic empowerment and self-reliance in bringing about social change. The chief minister received the blessings of Mata Amritanandamayi Devi (Amma). Paying tribute to Amma's contribution to society, she said her life was an example of selfless service, compassion and dedication to humanity. "Amma has devoted her entire life to helping the poor, the needy and those in distress. Her spirit of service is not limited to any one section or community. Her message is meant for all of humanity," she said. The Amrita Shree programme aims to make lakhs of women self-reliant through more than 15,000 self-help groups spread across 21 states. The initiative seeks to provide women with livelihood opportunities, encourage small enterprises and connect them with economic activities. Gupta said women's empowerment should go beyond financial assistance and must ensure dignity, opportunities and the back a woman's ability to make decisions.

Programmes such as Amrita Shree provide women an opportunity to become financially independent and take an active role in shaping their future, she said. Referring to Amma's teachings, the chief minister said spirituality should not remain confined to prayer and worship. Helping the needy, understanding their difficulties and bringing positive change to their lives were equally important aspects of true spirituality. She added that when compassion is combined with service, it can become a powerful force for wider social change. Describing Brahmasthanam Mahotsav as a confluence of spirituality, service and social commitment, Gupta said such events encourage people to adopt positive values and fulfil their responsibilities towards society MP Bansuri Swaraj and MLAs Shikha Roy and Gajendra Yadav, along with other dignitaries, were present at the event.

"Amma has devoted her entire life to helping the poor, the needy and those in distress. Her spirit of service is not limited to any one section or community

Delhi, Bihar sign MoU for bus services on 18 routes

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)



The Delhi and Bihar governments on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to introduce interstate bus services connecting the national capital with several destinations across Bihar. The initiative aims to provide greater convenience to passengers, particularly people from Bihar living in Delhi who often face difficulties travelling to their hometowns during festivals due to overcrowding in trains and private buses. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who attended the MoU signing ceremony, said bus services would initially operate on identified routes, with the number of routes and vehicles likely to be expanded depending on passenger demand. Bihar Transport Minister Damodar Rawat and his Delhi counterpart were also present at the event. According to officials, approximately 200 air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned buses will operate throughout the year across 18 routes between Delhi and Bihar. The new transport arrangement is expected to benefit nearly 20 lakh people from Bihar and the Purvanchal region residing in the national capital. Officials said ticket prices are likely to fall between Rs 2,000 and Rs 3,000 for sleeper and non-sleeper services. Speaking about the agreement, Delhi Transport Minister Singh said the initiative would make interstate travel significantly easier, particularly for Purvanchal residents who struggle to find transport during peak travel periods.

The proposed bus network will connect Delhi with several destinations in Bihar, including Araria, Bhagalpur, Buxar, Darbhanga, East Champaran, Gaya, Kishanganj, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Nawada, Patna and Purnia. The year-round services are expected to improve connectivity between the two states and provide passengers with an additional travel option beyond trains and private buses.

Delhi Police bust two EV battery theft networks, arrest nine

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)



The Delhi Police has dismantled two suspected inter-state gangs allegedly involved in stealing electric vehicle (EV) batteries, refurbishing them and selling them in the market, arresting nine people, including a woman, an official said on Friday. Police seized 88 lithium-ion batteries and 73 battery cells during the operations. According to the official, the gangs operated through a network in which young men allegedly stole batteries from electric scooters, while other members arranged their purchase, transportation, storage and subsequent dismantling and refurbishment before selling them at cheaper rates. During one operation, police arrested three people, raided two storage facilities in Wazirpur and Burari, and recovered 12 lithium batteries and 73 battery cells. In a separate operation in Alipur, six people, including a woman, were arrested and 76 lithium batteries, along with several other items, including an SUV, were seized, the official said. Investigators also traced financial transactions worth approximately Rs 22 lakh between two accused. Further investigation is underway to identify other members of the suspected networks.

Khandelwal inspects anti-encroachment drive in Old Delhi, seeks action on two more roads

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)



Days after the removal of permanent encroachments from parts of Old Delhi, Chandni Chowk MP Praveen Khandelwal on Thursday inspected Rani Avantibai Chowk, Pul Mithai, Naya Bazar, Lahori Gate and Khari Baoli to review the situation. He said action had also been sought against encroachments on Railway Station Road and Church Mission Road. The inspection was conducted in the presence of MCD Deputy Commissioner (Old Delhi) Kanika Nagpal and police officials. Khandelwal said the anti-encroachment drive had improved traffic movement and helped curb incidents of pickpocketing and bag-snatching in the Pul Mithai and Khari Baoli areas. The action followed a meeting of the Indraprastha Heritage Redevelopment Corporation on November 20, during which Khandelwal raised the issue of encroachments in Old Delhi, particularly Chandni Chowk, with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. The Chief Minister directed police and administrative officials to take action within 72 hours and submit a report. Subsequently, the MCD and Delhi Police conducted a 48-hour drive, removing permanent illegal encroachments from Pul Mithai and Khari Baoli. Khandelwal said he inspected the cleared stretches to counter what he described as misleading videos being circulated to suggest that encroachments had returned. He also appreciated the efforts of the civic body and police. Delhi BJP media head Praveen Shankar Kapoor said permanent illegal encroachments would not be allowed to return to the area. He credited the action to the intervention of the Chief Minister, MCD Deputy Commissioner Kanika Nagpal and DCP Niharika Bhatt. Chandni Chowk councillor Suman Kumar Gupta said the issue of illegal operations by private interstate buses on Railway Station Road, Red Fort Road and other locations would also be raised at the next meeting of the corporation.

Khandelwal said the anti-encroachment drive had improved traffic movement and helped curb incidents of pick-pocketing and bag-snatching in the Pul Mithai and Khari Baoli areas

Briefs News

Wedding rush prompts traffic restrictions on key South Delhi roads

NEW DELHI (AGENCY) : Over 36 weddings scheduled across South Delhi on Friday are expected to draw more than 14,700 guests and add nearly 9,200 vehicles to the roads, raising the possibility of traffic congestion on several major stretches, the Delhi Traffic Police said. In a traffic advisory, the police said the wedding functions are being held at venues located along SSN Marg (Bhati Mines Road), Bandh Road, Mandi Road and Mehrauli-Gurugram Road. The anticipated surge in traffic could lead to congestion on SSN Marg, 100-Foot Road, Anuvrat Marg, Aurobindo Marg, Mandi Road, Jonapur Road, Mehrauli-Gurugram Road and Mehrauli-Mahipalpur Road. Traffic personnel have been deployed at key locations to regulate the movement of vehicles and prevent disruptions, the advisory said. Commuters have been advised to avoid the affected roads, if possible, and plan their journeys accordingly. The police have also urged wedding attendees to use designated parking spaces and avoid parking vehicles along roadsides. For traffic-related assistance, commuters can contact the Delhi Traffic Police helpline at 1095, while the emergency helpline number is 112.

Delhi records minimum temperature of 9.3 degrees Celsius, AQI remains poor

NEW DELHI (AGENCY) : Delhi witnessed a cold and foggy morning on Friday, with the minimum temperature recorded at 9.3 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The weather department has predicted moderate to shallow fog during the day, while the maximum temperature is likely to hover around 26 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, the national capital's Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 221, placing it in the 'poor' category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Of the 57 monitoring stations that reported data, 36 recorded 'poor' air quality, two registered 'very poor' levels and 18 reported 'moderate' air quality. Ghoga and Delhi Technological University (DTU) recorded the highest pollution levels, with an AQI of 304 each. The CRRI Mathura Road station followed with an AQI of 298. As per CPCB standards, an AQI of 0-50 is classified as 'good', 51-100 as 'satisfactory', 101-200 as 'moderate', 201-300 as 'poor', 301-400 as 'very poor' and 401-500 as 'severe'.

Four Arrested with 63 Smack Packets in Delhi's Connaught Place

NEW DELHI (AGENCY) : Four people, including three women, were arrested after police allegedly recovered 63 packets of smack from them in Connaught Place, a high-security area of the national capital, an officer said on Friday. The arrests were made on Wednesday during routine foot patrolling near a five-star hotel opposite Panchkuian Road. According to police, the patrolling team noticed three women and a man behaving suspiciously near the hotel in the Outer Circle area of Connaught Place. A search led to the recovery of 63 small packets containing suspected narcotics. The police also seized approximately 15 grams of smack, including the weight of the plastic packaging, and Rs 20,550 in cash from their possession. The accused have been identified as Paro (55), Jamuna (42), Ramkali (40) and Yogender (56). Police said a Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team conducted a field test, which confirmed the presence of a narcotic substance.

Delhi HC seeks satyendar Jain's reply on bail challenge

NEW DELHI (AGENCY) : The Delhi High Court on Friday sought a response from Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former minister Satyendar Jain on a petition filed by the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) challenging the bail granted to him in a corruption case linked to the Delhi Jal Board. Justice Sachin Datta issued a notice to Jain and scheduled the next hearing for December 22. The Delhi government's ACB has challenged the trial court's September 3 order granting bail to Jain, arguing that the court failed to properly assess the evidence and allegations against him. While granting bail, the trial court had questioned the timing of Jain's arrest, observing that detaining an accused towards the end of an investigation without compelling reasons or changed circumstances could raise concerns about arbitrariness.

Delhi SIR : 3.38 lakh Form 6 applications received, 3.13 lakh processed

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)



Delhi received 3.38 lakh applications seeking inclusion in the electoral rolls during the claims and objections period of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), indicating that a large number of voters left out of the draft list may not find a place in the final electoral roll. According to official figures, a total of 5,50,370 Form 6 applications were submitted before and during the revision exercise. These included 2,12,400 applications filed before August 31 and 3,37,970 received between August 31 and November 25.

Of the total applications, 3,13,263 had been processed by November 22. Officials clarified that several applications submitted during the SIR period were from first-time voters and those newly eligible for registration, and therefore did not necessarily represent electors whose names were missing from the draft roll. The election authorities also received 88,509 Form 7 applications seeking deletion of names from the electoral rolls across the two periods. Of these, 51,471 were filed before August 31, while 37,038 came in between August 31 and November 25. The draft electoral roll, released on August 31, had removed 47.5 lakh names from Delhi's earlier electorate of 1.45 crore. The deleted entries included 43.32 lakh voters classified as shifted, 2.82 lakh as deceased and 1.45 lakh as duplicate entries. BuyMaps Apart from Form 6, the authorities received 631 Form 6A applications for registration of overseas voters during the SIR period, compared with 1,351 in the preceding period.

Overall, the number of applications received under the four categories declined during the revision exercise. Between August 31 and November 25, authorities received 5,01,880 applications, against 5,25,990 submitted before August 31. Form 7 applications accounted for 37,038 submissions during the SIR period, compared with 51,471 earlier. Similarly, 1,26,241 Form 8 applications, meant for correcting voter details and updating residential addresses, were received during the period, against 2,60,768 before August 31. Among the constituencies, Matiala recorded the highest disposal of Form 6 applications at 15,735. Vikaspuri followed with 14,438, Uttam Nagar with 12,341, Dwarka with 10,639 and Palam with 8,365. In the Form 7 category, Burari topped the list with 9,390 disposals, followed by Vikaspuri at 6,570, Okhla at 4,902, Badarpur at 4,078 and Dwarka at 2,183. Matiala also led in the disposal of Form 8 applications, with 11,481 cases processed. Vikaspuri recorded 8,981, Ghonda 7,667, Palam 7,595 and Okhla 7,416.

Officials clarified that several applications submitted during the SIR period were from first-time voters and those newly eligible for registration

Shopping between trains, the micro-economy inside Delhi Metro

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)



Stepping off the train in Delhi no longer just means braving chaotic street crowds to score a bargain. Across the city's major commute hubs, a thriving micro-economy has bloomed right inside the metro stations, turning daily travel into impulse shopping sprees. At Sarojini Nagar, commuters don't even need to exit the station to hunt for deals. Racks are packed with seasonal coats, tops, and winter sweaters with prices starting as low as Rs 50 and rarely crossing Rs 200. Though if you browse long enough, you might chance upon bizarre yet quirky, Bollywood-themed prints. Down the line at Lajpat Nagar, metro travellers are greeted with internet-driven trinkets from viral Labubu charms to chaotic "AI-slop" keychains. Further west, Rajouri Garden operates on a festive clock. Salesman Kamran opens shop between 9 and 10:30 AM, stocking waist chains, coin belts, and festival-specific jhumkas that routinely sell out by the 4–5 PM rush. Their jewellery stock changes with the season, as heavy, festive pieces are swapped out for more contemporary winter pieces. Meanwhile, Mandi House caters to students and couples during the 6–7 PM evening wave. Here, saleswoman Arfa manages earring sales alongside evergreen crocheted flowers (Rs 150–Rs 300), though perfumes and hair clips move more slowly. Along the same line, passengers exiting Rajiv Chowk can find beautiful Kashmiri bangles for Rs 150 per stack.

Delhi Govt opens 'sheesh mahal' bungalow to media

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)



The Delhi government on Friday organised a media tour of the former official residence of ex-chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, popularly dubbed 'Sheesh Mahal' by the BJP, showcasing its expensive interiors, furnishings and luxury facilities. Located at 6 Flagstaff Road in north Delhi, the bungalow was occupied by Kejriwal during his tenure as chief minister. According to Public Works Department (PWD) officials, several items inside the residence carry hefty price tags, including powder room fittings worth Rs 5.8 lakh, a baithak valued at Rs 41.16 lakh and lobby furnishings costing approximately Rs 7.58 lakh.

Large signboards welcoming visitors to 'Sheesh Mahal' and stating that the property was built at a cost of Rs 58 crore were installed at the entrance. A red carpet was also laid out for the media tour. The sprawling residence covers 1,905 square metres and features eight bedrooms, 13 bathrooms and a wellness room equipped with a sauna and jacuzzi. Chandeliers above a 14-seater dining table are valued at around Rs 11 lakh, while a kitchen dumbwaiter has been priced at Rs 7 lakh. Television screens inside the bungalow continuously play footage of Kejriwal's first swearing-in ceremony as chief minister, along with clips of his earlier promise not to accept an official residence or government vehicle. An online content creator dressed in Kejriwal's trademark cap and muffler was also invited to imitate the former chief minister during the event.

PWD Minister Parvesh Verma said the government's objective was to ensure transparency and inform citizens about how public money had been spent. He maintained that the exercise had no political motive and added that the department had displayed bill and invoice numbers alongside the prices of individual items.

Verma further claimed that the residence had been preserved exactly as it was before and said members of the public would be able to visit it by purchasing tickets. The bungalow is expected to open to the public next month, with an online booking facility. Officials indicated that entry tickets could cost around Rs 20, while senior citizens and college students would be allowed free entry. The Delhi government had earlier announced plans to engage a private hospitality company to manage the property. The bungalow is also expected to be used for official conferences, meetings and lunches.

Large signboards welcoming visitors to 'Sheesh Mahal' and stating that the property was built at a cost of Rs 58 crore were installed at the entrance

Open Search
EDITORIAL

Expansion of Parliament, Respect for the Rights of States

India is the world's largest democracy. Its vastness, diversity and federal structure distinguish it from other democratic systems. In view of the country's growing population, social diversity and changing governance requirements, making Parliament more effective has become the need of the hour. In this context, the Union Cabinet's initiative to revise the delimitation formula, propose an approximately 50 per cent expansion of the Lok Sabha and safeguard the states' share in Parliament until 2051 has emerged as an important political and constitutional issue.

The Lok Sabha is the highest elected body representing the aspirations of the people of the country. At present, the Lok Sabha has 543 elected members. If the proposal to increase its strength by 50 per cent is implemented, the number of elected representatives could rise to more than 800. This could help reduce the growing population burden on individual Members of Parliament and provide an opportunity to address citizens' concerns more effectively in Parliament. However, the significance of this proposal is not limited to increasing the number of seats. Its real objective should be to maintain representation, equality and federal balance within the country's democratic system. The fundamental principle of delimitation is the redrawing of electoral constituencies based on population. Over time, changes in population growth and its geographical distribution make it necessary to revise constituency boundaries. This can help establish a balance between the number of voters and the representation provided by elected members. However, in a federal country like India, delimitation is not merely a matter of population arithmetic; it is also linked to the political rights of states, the direction of development and national unity.

Southern Indian states, in particular, have expressed concerns regarding delimitation. States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have made remarkable progress in family planning, education, healthcare and population control. These states have made sustained efforts over the years to regulate population growth. If seats are redistributed solely on the basis of population, states with relatively lower population growth may face the possibility of a decline in their share of representation in Parliament. On the other hand, states in northern India with larger populations may see an increase in their parliamentary seats.

This is the sensitive issue that makes the proposal to safeguard the states' share in Parliament until 2051 particularly significant. The objective is to reassure states that have performed well in population control and social development that their political voice will not be weakened. Such a step could help maintain confidence in the federal system and prevent a sense of political inequality among states. The expansion of the Lok Sabha could also provide a positive opportunity in this direction. With an increase in the number of members, more representatives could be included in parliamentary committees. Different regions, languages, social groups and local issues could receive better representation at the national level. It could also create an opportunity to strengthen women's political representation, encourage youth participation and amplify the voices of disadvantaged sections of society. However, merely increasing the number of seats will not automatically improve the quality of democracy. Greater accountability of MPs, the quality of parliamentary debates and serious discussions on issues of public interest are equally essential.

A liberal revised

BIDYUT CHAKRABARTY

Few figures in modern Indian intellectual history have been claimed so insistently or read so selectively as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Hindu nationalism now presents the author of Anandamath and "Vande Mataram" as a founding prophet who gave India its war cry and its mother goddess. In 2025, the song's 150th anniversary brought this claim into Parliament itself. Yet a careful reading of Bankim's work reveals a more troubled, questioning, and historically-bounded figure. To call him a Hindu nationalist in the twentieth-century Hindutva sense is to read later politics back into a nineteenth-century mind. Hindu nationalism thus appropriated Bankim's legacy rather than simply inheriting it, drawing on elements of his writing that made such appropriation possible.

Every age reshapes its ancestors in its own image, and few have been transformed as thoroughly as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. His face appears on banners, his song is quoted in parliamentary speeches, and he is hailed as the father of Hindu nationalism. Yet that portrait rests on a handful of pages from a vast body of work and refuses to read even those pages to the end. Read in full and in the context of his own century, Bankim was no Hindu nationalist. He was a liberal reformer, a Bengali patriot, and a restless, self-questioning modern intellectual. His name has been appropriated for a project he never imagined. Auguste Comte, John Stuart Mill, and Jeremy Bentham shaped his thinking. He wrote about science, popularised positivist thought for Bengali readers, and filled the satirical sketches of Kamalakanter Daptar with scorn for hypocrisy and blind custom, including Hindu custom. None of this fits the profile of an ideologue of religious purity. His central question was not 'How do we make India Hindu?' but 'How do we make our people modern, ethical, and free in mind?'

The portrayal of Bankim as a proponent of Hindu nationalism rests almost entirely on Anandamath, published in 1882. Yet the novel ends by calling off its own uprising. After the ascetic rebels triumph, a sage-like healer tells their leader, Satyananda, that his mission has ended. British rule, he explains, must continue because the people first need Western knowledge and science. Until then, the English should be seen as friends, not enemies. The rebellion is dissolved. No founding text of militant nationalism ends this way. A manifesto for a Hindu State would conclude with conquest and coronation, not with a rebel leader persuaded to lay down his arms and await the spread of learning. Hence, it is fair to say that Anandamath is not the triumphant conclusion of a militant manifesto. It is the conclusion of a liberal reformer who saw national regeneration as an internal, cultural, and ethical process.

The cost of denying armed forces equitable pay

SS BOPARAI

To read the forces' silence on NFU as acquiescence would be a misreading, and a moral failure



THERE is a category of injustice that masquerades as prudence. It is the kind that hides behind spreadsheets, procedural notes and the polished language of fiscal responsibility. The continued denial of non-functional upgradation (NFU) to the Indian armed forces belongs to this category. Defended by those in authority on grounds of "financial implications", this position betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of what national security actually costs and what it is actually built upon. The NFU is a pay parity mechanism, extended to officers of organised Group A Central Services, that grants a higher pay scale when their counterparts in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) move upward, even in the absence of a direct promotion. It is, in essence, the State's acknowledgment that officers who serve within structured hierarchies and who may be constrained by limited promotion opportunities, deserve to be treated equitably, relative to the broader civil services architecture. Every major organised service enjoys this benefit. The armed forces alone do not. It is a policy choice. And it demands justification.

The government's defence against extending NFU to the military is rooted in financial caution. This argument commits what philosophers call a category error it applies the logic of one domain to a question that belongs to an entirely different one.

National security institutions are not analogous to commercial enterprises or standard administrative departments. Their outputs deterrence, territorial integrity, crisis response, civil order during catastrophe cannot be measured in quarterly returns or audited against input costs. The armed forces exist to guarantee the very preconditions under which economic activity, democratic governance and civilian administration become possible. To subject them to a narrow cost-benefit calculus is a logical inversion of the relationship between the State and its security apparatus.

Moreover, the financial argument fails even on its own terms. The actual fiscal outlay involved in extending NFU to the armed forces, relative to the overall defence budget and the total government expenditure, is modest. Studies and submissions by veterans' organisations and parliamentary standing committees have underscored this point. The projected cost is not trivial, but it is far from prohibitive particularly for a nation that routinely finds resources for infrastructure projects, electoral expenditures and the exponential growth of the civilian bureaucracy. Beyond finances lies the deeper question of institutional equity. The Indian State is structured around a hierarchy of services, each with defined roles, responsibilities and entitlements. Within this framework, certain benefits signal the State's recognition of the unique demands placed upon particular institutions. The NFU, in this sense, is a symbolic marker of institutional parity. When the State extends the NFU to the Indian Forest Service, the Indian Revenue Service, the Indian Postal Service, and dozens of other organised cadres, while excluding the armed forces, it constructs a visible hierarchy of institutional valuation. The message, whether intended or not, is unambiguous: those who collect taxes, manage forests and deliver mail are worthy of pay parity; those who defend the nation's borders and die in its service are not. Over time, institutional inequities crystallise into social attitudes. They shape the way officers perceive their own standing within the State system. They influence the manner in which civil-military relations are conducted. And they send a signal internally and externally about how seriously the nation takes its own defence commitments.

The armed forces are bound by a discipline that prohibits public assertion of grievance. Their silence is not consent. It is the highest form of institutional loyalty and it must not be exploited.

Military scholarship identifies morale as a force multiplier of the highest order. An army that believes in its cause, its leadership and the fairness of the system it serves within, fights with a qualitatively different intensity than one corroded by grievance. Morale is strategic capital. Officers in the armed forces operate under conditions that defy civilian comparison. Prolonged postings in high-altitude terrain, active insurgency zones, forward positions along contested borders these hardships involve sacrifice: of comfort, of family life, of physical and psychological health, and in the most ultimate sense, of life itself. The ethos that sustains commitment under such conditions is inseparable from a foundational expectation of fairness.

When that expectation is frustrated, the damage is institutional. Serving officers weigh the costs and benefits of continued service. When those costs include discrimination in pay parity and benefits are framed in terms of "national duty" rather than equitable treatment, the calculus shifts. The armed forces' retention crisis, particularly at the level of colonels and brigadiers, the grade levels most affected by NFU denial, is related to it. If the State is serious about professionalising and modernising its military an aspiration expressed in every defence review and strategic document of the past two decades it must reckon with the fact that professional excellence requires a professional environment, which cannot coexist with institutionalised inequity.

Who has a development plan for Punjab

NAVREET KAUR

The hard reality is that electoral politics has pushed developmental concerns to the margins of public discourse



AS the 2027 Assembly elections approach, Punjab's political landscape is being dominated by rallies, shifting loyalties, alliances and increasingly sharp attacks on rivals. Each party is striving to sway voters in its favour, either to capture power or to hold on to it. Yet one fundamental question remains unanswered: what vision of development do they offer Punjab for the next decade? Opposition parties blame the present government for the drug menace and debt crisis. However, the political narratives largely overlook the state's deeper structural challenges of unemployment, migration, demographic imbalance, agrarian distress, declining industrial base and the weakening of higher education. Equally disturbing is the near absence of political outrage over the pollution of Punjab's rivers and other water bodies. The development crisis is threatening Punjab's economic competitiveness, social stability and institutional capacity.

The hard reality is that electoral politics has pushed developmental concerns to the margins of public discourse. This is neither accidental nor a sudden development. It reflects a deeper transformation in political culture which has altered the relationship between politics, governance and the electorate. The rapid expansion of social media has further accelerated this shift. Political performance and accountability have increasingly given way to image-building, electoral messaging, political accusations and carefully crafted narratives.

Politics is shifting from delivering results to managing perceptions and from addressing public concerns to shaping electoral narratives. The consequence is a weakening culture of questioning, in which voters are increasingly mobilised through political messaging rather than empowered to demand answers and hold governments accountable. This transformation has benefited political parties more than the people of Punjab. Accountability is a demanding and a difficult task. It requires measurable and visible results with respect to which government in its respective years generated jobs, increased financial allocations for universities, made attempts to clean polluted rivers and made attempts to rebuild the industrial base. These are long-term commitments whose outcomes can be measured and governments held responsible for their failures. On the other side, electoral marketing offers immediate political dividends without accountability. Parties compete through announcements, promises and welfare commitments rather than development outcomes.

The fiscal implications of this approach cannot be ignored. Expenditure on power subsidies rose from Rs 13,443 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 19,372 crore in 2025-26. Similarly, the expenditure on free bus travel for women rose from Rs 495 crore in 2022 to Rs 600 crore in 2026. In 2026, Rs 9,300 crore was earmarked for the "Mukh Mantri Mawan Dheeyan Satkar Yojana", of which Rs 3,934.80 crore was disbursed to 80.05 lakh women. According to PRS Legislative Research's Punjab Budget Analysis 2026-27, the state's outstanding liabilities increased from 43.6% of GSDP in 2022-23 to 45.2% in the revised estimates for 2025-26. The outstanding liabilities are approximately Rs 4.48 lakh crore. This growing burden, alongside committed expenditure and revenue deficits, restricts the state's fiscal flexibility to invest in infrastructure, industrial development, education and healthcare.

The critical question is not simply how much Punjab is borrowing, but whether these borrowings are generating productive assets and strengthening the state's future revenue-generating capacity. Political compulsions have taken over discussion on development crisis. Any party questioning the affordability or sustainability of existing electoral promises risks being portrayed by its opponents as anti-poor.

Consequently, parties find it politically safer to outbid one another on financial assistance and subsidies. Immediate financial benefits are tangible and electorally visible, whereas the benefits of industrial revival, quality education, productive employment and institutional reform take years to materialise. This asymmetry is the root cause of the altered electoral incentives. The damage, therefore, is not only merely fiscal but also a gradual transformation of public expectations and the standards by which political performance is judged.

Welfare programmes and financial assistance are essential instruments of social protection, particularly for the poor and vulnerable households facing economic distress. However, the responsibility of an elected government extends beyond providing relief. The welfare initiatives should strengthen people's capabilities and expand their opportunities. The objective should be to reconcile social protection with productive investment, not to treat them as competing priorities. Data analysis shows that Punjab's economic and institutional challenges of mounting debt, unemployment, migration, stagnant industry and water pollution have accumulated over several years and cannot be attributed exclusively to one political party. Successive governments have failed, in varying degrees, to address several structural weaknesses. Similarly, voters have failed to fix the accountability of the elected representatives. Democracy empowers them to choose and reject candidates every five years. They can question and seek accountability from the elected representatives. The changing political culture has enabled parties to shape public opinion, influence the perception of voters through social media and other communication platforms. This often overshadow questions of governance and performance. For Punjab to regain its lost direction and walk on the path of development, voters need to decisively question governments and hold them accountable.

The purpose of the 2027 Assembly election should not merely warrant a change of government. A change in the direction of governance and development is needed. The election should be about more than who forms the next government. The state needs a political agenda that places productive investment above short-term political gains, employment above electoral rhetoric, institutional strengthening above centralisation and sustainable development above financially unviable promises.

Owner, Printer, Publisher & Editor Vijay Kumar Printed at **OS Publications**, B-2542, Narela Industrial Area, North West Delhi-110040 and printed at 1536/108, Ganesh Pura Road Tri. Nagar, New Delhi-110035
RNI No. DELENG/2016/67075 (Phone : 011-27380260 Moble :9210092542) E-mail : opensearchenglish@gmail.com , Website : www.opensearch.co.in (Legal Advisor : Praveen Kumar)
Editorial Office : 66/1, Janpath, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001

Goa to bring AI-powered learning to classrooms for students with disabilities

PANAJI : OPEN SEARCH



Goa today launched Nclude Labs which is a technology-enabled learning space that lets students with disabilities study independently, using voice-based AI. I-Stem, a not-for-profit that uses technology to make education and employment accessible to persons with disabilities, is partnering with the Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Government of Goa, to roll the labs out across the state.

The launch was held at Santa Cruz Higher Secondary School, Santa Cruz, Goa, at 10:30 AM. Shri Guruprasad R Pawaskar, State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities inaugurated the lab. A Memorandum of Understanding was exchanged between the Commissioner's office and I-Stem.India has over 2.68 crore persons with disabilities (Census 2011), yet classrooms, textbooks and study tools are still largely designed for those who can see, hear and write in conventional ways. Nclude is I-Stem's answer to this gap. The AI-powered assistant is already used by over 1,25,000 people across India. It brings together career discovery and access to information, a job coach that matches users to openings with inclusive employers and iTutor, a voice-based study tool where a student asks a question aloud and learns at their own pace.

Nclude Labs takes this into schools. The labs are already live in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, and Goa now joins this list as the first state in the programme to

Voice-based AI study tool iTutor, already used in four states, comes to Goa. The Nclude platform has reached over 1.25 lakh people across India

anchor the rollout through a formal MoU with its disability commissionerate. I-Stem also works with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of India, on the Sugamya Bharat App.

Speaking at the launch, Varsha Naik, Director, Directorate for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Goa, said, "I congratulate I-Stem on setting up Nclude Labs in Goa. These labs will give students with disabilities the tools, technology and support they need to learn with confidence and take part fully in the classroom. By bringing AI closer to inclusive education, this is a forward-looking step that can make Goa a model state for the rest of the country."

Furthermore, Shakul Sonker, Co-founder and COO, I-Stem said, "Every child should be able to ask a question and get an answer, whether they read print, listen, or speak. Goa's decision to take Nclude Labs into its schools shows what state leadership and accessible technology can do together. We are grateful to the Commissioner's office for this partnership, and we hope other states will follow." "Inclusive education cannot wait for infrastructure to catch up. These labs put the tools in the hands of students and teachers now, and our office is committed to taking them to schools across Goa."

Goa's Sahil Kotadiya claims the India crown, heads to the world ultimate bartender championship finale

PANAJI : OPEN SEARCH



Monkey Shoulder, the premium blended malt, concluded the India finale of the 9th edition of the Ultimate Bartender Championship at New Delhi, with Sahil Kotadiya from Nutcase, Goa, emerging as the national winner. The Ultimate Bartender Championship is the India leg of Monkey Shoulder's global World Ultimate Bartender Championship.

The championship drew 1,500+ registrations across 10 cities, with 1,000+ bartenders competing on ground, the highest-ever on-ground participation in India. From this field, only the top 20 advanced to the India finale, where they put their skills to the test across a series of challenges designed to assess the fundamentals that matter behind the bar. From pouring and nosing to industry knowledge, service and crafting the perfect serve, the competition focused on real-world bartending skills, precision and performance under pressure.

Held on 18th November, 2026, the finale culminated in one winner earning the opportunity to represent India at the World Ultimate Bartender Championship Global Final. He will now advance to the World Ultimate Bartender Championship Global Final on 4th December 2026 at XLive, Gurugram India, competing alongside WUBC Champions from other countries to win the Global Title.Speaking about the India edition, Vidit Mantri, Brand Ambassador, Monkey Shoulder India, said: "The India finale brings together bartenders who have earned their place through the city rounds, giving them an opportunity to test their skills at a national level. It is about recognising the knowledge, precision and consistency that underpin great bartending. We congratulate Sahil Kotadiya and hope that he wins the competition & brings the global title to India."

Speaking about the World Ultimate Bartender Championship Global Final, Joe Petch, Monkey Shoulder Global Brand Ambassador, said: "Winning a national championship is an important step in a bartender's journey.

PhonePe Lending facilitates over 20 lakh loans to micro-enterprises

PANAJI : OPEN SEARCH

Over 60% of loans disbursed in Tier 2 cities and beyond, with 15% availed by new-to-credit businesses PhonePe Lending today announced that it has facilitated the disbursal of over 20 lakh loans to micro-enterprises through its network of leading bank and NBFC partners. Since launching its Merchant Lending services in 2023, the business has facilitated loans across ~97% of India's pincodes – democratising formal credit for small businesses nationwide.

Micro-enterprises account for a majority of India's MSMEs and anchor local jobs and consumption, yet limited access to formal financial services has long excluded them from organised credit. PhonePe has bridged this gap by enabling these merchants to avail loans seamlessly on the PhonePe for Business app, supported on the ground by a network of over 50,000 frontline field executives. By combining this phygital distribution network with advanced AI models, PhonePe Lending has been able to democratise credit distribution at scale across historically underserved markets.

Today, the platform serves businesses with average monthly sales of ?50,000 – 15% of whom are new to credit, helping them meet daily credit needs, fund inventory, and power business expansion.

Over 60% of all loans facilitated come from Tier 2 cities and beyond, including one-third from rural Tier 5 and Tier 6 towns and villages*. PhonePe's reach extends deep into India's hinterlands.

TOEFL sees growing adoption beyond metros as emerging Indian cities Gain Ground

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)



As Indian students explore a wider range of international education opportunities, TOEFL, administered by ETS, the organisation behind TOEFL and GRE exams, is witnessing growing adoption across both established metropolitan centres and emerging education markets. The changing geographical distribution of test-takers reflects the expanding interest in international education and the evolving preferences of students considering overseas academic opportunities.

The trend is particularly visible across several Indian cities. Hyderabad and Bengaluru together accounted for approximately 16% of India's TOEFL test-taker base in FY 2025–26, up from 12.8% in FY 2023–24. Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata have also witnessed an upward movement with Vadodara, Coimbatore, and Thiruvananthapuram emerging as important growth markets, extending TOEFL's reach beyond the metropolitan cities. This expansion reflects evolving dynamics in the international education landscape, with Indian students increasingly exploring a wider range of study destinations alongside traditional choices. In this changing landscape, TOEFL recorded year-on-year growth in test volumes in October 2026.

Commenting on the evolving preferences of Indian students, Karan Lalit, Executive Director – South Asia, TOEFL and GRE, ETS, said, "We are delighted that TOEFL has grown year-on-year in test volumes in October 2026, even as the international education market goes through a period of change. This shows that Indian students increasingly see TOEFL as their preferred English test, both for how it fits their lives and for where it can take them. With the Enhanced TOEFL iBT, introduced in January 2026, we have redesigned the test experience around what today's students expect. Students can take the test at a test centre or from home. They can register as late as two days before the test and, if needed, retest in as little as three days. They see their Reading and Listening scores as soon as the test ends and receive full results within three days.

MyBest scores mean institutions see a student's best performance across attempts. TOEFL is accepted by over 13,500 institutions in more than 160 countries, including all major institutions in the US, UK, Canada, Germany and the rest of Europe, and other major study destinations. Together, this flexibility and reach give students the confidence to pursue a wider range of international education opportunities.The Enhanced TOEFL iBT, introduced on January 21, 2026, reflects ETS's efforts to respond to the preferences of a new generation of test-takers, particularly Gen Z. Growing up with digital-first services, today's students increasingly expect convenience.

Appreciate and first global launch the GREAT FG Global freedom fund portfolio

MUMBAI (AGENCY)



Appreciate today announced the launch of the GREAT FG Global Freedom Fund Portfolio on its GREAT Funds platform, in partnership with First Global, a leading investment management firm, which has been operating in global markets since 1999. The fund will provide Indian investors access to a globally diversified, actively managed multi-asset investment strategy, with a minimum investment of $7,500. The FG Global Freedom Fund follows a dynamic, multi-asset investment strategy, allocating across equities, fixed income, commodities and alternatives across all regions and countries of the world. The strategy actively adjusts its positioning in response to evolving market conditions, economic cycles and investment opportunities. The fund is regulated by the Cayman Monetary Authority and is not liable to tax in its home jurisdiction.

The portfolio evaluates opportunities across both Developed and Emerging Markets (EMs), with exposure spanning sectors such as technology, industrials, healthcare, financials and consumer businesses. Its investment universe enables participation in opportunities that may be underrepresented in domestic-only portfolios, while its multi-asset and multi-country approach seeks to reduce dependence on the performance of any single market or asset class. The aim is to save the investors from the SCCAR (Single country, single currency, single asset) risk and invest with a manager who has been active across the globe for 27 years. The strategy's historical track record also provides an illustration of its performance through different market environments. An illustrative investment of US$7,500 in the master fund in August 2023 would have grown to approximately US$10,301 by August 2026. In rupee terms, the corresponding investment value grew from approximately ?6.1 lakh to ?9.8 lakh, compared with approximately ?7.5 lakh for the Nifty 50 over the same period. These historical results are after the master fund fees and charges and are not indicative of future performance. "The launch of the portfolio in collaboration with First Global is an important addition to our GREAT Funds offering. We believe Indian investors should have access to a wider range of professionally managed investment strategies beyond traditional domestic asset classes.

Coca-Cola India brings back 'The Zing Thing,' now in a Can

PANAJI : OPEN SEARCH



Coca-Cola India is bringing back Gold Spot, the iconic Indian orange beverage fondly remembered as 'The Zing Thing'. Returning in a new can format, the brand brings back its signature tangy orange flavour and the spirited personality that made it a much-loved favourite.

Introduced in India in 1952, Gold Spot became a familiar part of everyday moments, from school canteen breaks and birthday celebrations to neighbourhood hangouts and family gatherings. In the mid-1980s, the brand introduced 'The Zing Thing', a memorable positioning that captured its youthful energy and spirited personality. Sumeli Chatterjee, Head- Sparkling Flavors, Marketing, Coca-Cola India and Southwest Asia said: "Almost everyone who grew up with Gold Spot has a story to tell, and that enduring connection is what makes this return so meaningful. Gold Spot presents the same tangy orange taste that consumers remember, and now in a can. And for those experiencing it for the first time, one sip and the Zing does the talking. We are proud to welcome Gold Spot back and to begin its next chapter with a new generation of consumers. The Zing Thing is back!" Gold Spot joined The Coca-Cola Company family in 1993, and its place in India's memory has only grown since.

Toyota Kirloskar motor brings back 'DRUM TAO' for a bigger 21-City India tour

PANAJI : OPEN SEARCH



Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) today announced the return of DRUM TAO, Japan's internationally acclaimed percussion ensemble and TKM's brand ambassadors, for the second edition of its India tour. After the overwhelming response to last year's 13-city tour, DRUM TAO will this time perform across 21 cities in all four regions of the country, with a focus on tier 2 cities, bringing their signature blend of traditional Japanese Wa-Daiko drumming and modern stagecraft to even more audiences. The tour will run in two phases, from 1st December to 24th December 2026 and from 8th January to 1st February 2027. It opens at the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and includes performances at music and cultural festivals such as the Repertwahr Cultural Festival in Lucknow and the Island Music Festival in Port Blair, before concluding at Chandigarh.

RBI to strengthen credit infrastructure to help MSMEs scale up, compete globally : Governor Malhotra

MUMBAI (AGENCY)



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will further strengthen credit infrastructure and remove bottlenecks in access to finance for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to help them scale up, expand exports and compete globally, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Friday. While addressing the SME Finance and Investment Summit in Mumbai, Malhotra stressed that while India has created significant growth opportunities for small businesses, their ability to capitalise on these opportunities depends critically on access to timely and adequate finance. "For our part, the Reserve Bank will keep strengthening the infrastructure for MSME credit, keep removing the frictions that slow it down, and keep listening to the sector as it grows," the Governor said. The Governor noted that bank credit to MSMEs grew by 27 per cent year-on-year in September 2026, significantly higher than the overall bank credit growth of 19.4 per cent. Over the five-year period between September 2021 and September 2026, bank credit outstanding to the MSME sector increased from Rs 17.97 lakh crore to Rs 42.89 lakh crore, registering a compound annual growth rate of about 19 per cent. "The credit gap has certainly not disappeared, but it has narrowed considerably, and quickly. Our attention must now turn especially to first-time borrowers, micro enterprises, women-led businesses and units in smaller towns and rural areas," Malhotra said.

Highlighting the role of digital infrastructure in improving access to finance, the Governor said the Account Aggregator framework facilitated loans worth about Rs 3.5 lakh crore in FY2025-26.

Briefs News

Uralchem expands supply to India with a unique product

MOSCOW (AGENCY) : Uralchem Group, a leading global producer of mineral fertilisers, is starting sales of calcium nitrate granular (CNG) a unique product from its SOLAR line in India. The product is making its debut in the country at the exhibition held alongside the Annual Seminar of the Fertiliser Association of India (FAI), taking place in New Delhi on 26–28 November. Visitors to the event will be able to receive free advice on using SOLAR CNG on various crops. CNG is a unique mineral fertiliser with no equivalent on the market: the content of the active ingredient (i.e. calcium nitrate) is 98%, which is 20–25% higher than that of standard calcium products. As the nutrient is so highly concentrated, farmers need smaller amounts of the fertiliser, which lowers application rates, as well as the cost of logistics and storage. SOLAR CNG reliably corrects calcium deficiency in vegetable, fruit, and berry crops. It also improves produce quality, shelf life, and yield. The fertiliser is especially effective in greenhouses and on acidic soils. These properties make CNG well suited to the Indian market: the growth of drip irrigation, the expansion of the fruit and vegetable sector, the drive for higher yields per unit area, the push for more efficient fertiliser use, and the increase in quality standards for produce are all creating steady demand for advanced plant nutrition solutions.

How your credit score affects your car loan interest rate

NEW DELHI (AGENCY) : A difference of one percentage point in a car loan interest rate can add thousands of rupees to the borrowing cost. Your credit score influences the lender's assessment, although income, existing debt and repayment capacity also affect the rate offered. Improving your credit profile before applying may help you obtain more competitive financing terms. Understanding how credit scores work also helps you distinguish genuine borrowing savings from advertised rates that may not apply to your application. Your credit score helps lenders assess repayment behaviour and the risk associated with extending credit. A stronger credit history may support a lower car loan interest rate, although there is no universal pricing scale linking individual scores to fixed rates. Lenders also consider income, debt obligations and their own lending policies. TransUnion CIBIL Scores range from 300 to 900, with higher scores generally indicating stronger creditworthiness. However, two applicants with similar scores may receive different interest rates because their financial profiles differ. The minimum credit score required for a car loan varies between lenders and products. Bajaj Finance New Car Loan requires a CIBIL Score of 650 or higher, subject to other eligibility criteria. Meeting this threshold allows an applicant to be considered but does not guarantee approval or the lowest available interest rate. Prateek Group Envisions a New Era of Fine Living Built Around Sport, Wellness and Leisure

Stock markets decline in early trade after 2-day rally

MUMBAI (AGENCY) : Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty drifted lower in early trade on Friday after a two-day rally amid profit-taking in blue-chip IT stocks and HDFC Bank. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 339 points to 83,958.53 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 73.10 points to 25,812.35. From the Sensex pack, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Tech, Infosys, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finserv were among the major laggards. Titan, Tata Steel, Bharat Electronics and Power Grid were among the winners. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded at USD 96.50 per barrel. "On the commodities front, WTI crude has extended its advance toward USD 85 a barrel, with renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East adding to supply concerns," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth-tech firm, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 5,843.33 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index were quoting in positive territory.Buy Maps On Thursday, the Sensex climbed 390.31 points, or 0.46 per cent, to settle at 84,328.59. The Nifty rose 65.25 points, or 0.25 per cent, to end at 25,884.50.

We will develop Garhfuljhar as a major centre of faith, spirituality and social harmony : CM sai

RAIPUR. OPEN SEARCH



Guru Nanak Dev Ji's message of love, equality and humanity is a source of inspiration for the entire society : Chief Minister Sai

Chief Minister Vishnu Dev Sai stated that Garhfuljhar in Mahasamund district, associated with the sacred memories of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, is a precious spiritual and historical heritage of Chhattisgarh. This sacred site will be developed as a major center of faith, spirituality, service, and social harmony. He stated that his government is committed to preserving and promoting the state's rich religious and cultural heritage. Garhfuljhar will be developed in such a way that it becomes a source of inspiration for devotion, harmony, and social unity for generations to come.

Chief Minister Shri Sai was addressing a special Kirtan gathering organized by the Sikh community at the historic Nanak Sagar Sahib Gurudwara in Garhfuljhar, Basna development block, Mahasamund district. He bowed his head at the Gurudwara and prayed for the peace, prosperity, and well-being of the people of the state and listened to the Shabad Kirtan with devotion. Chief Minister Shri Sai said that Chhattisgarh is fortunate that the first Sikh Guru, Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj, set foot on this land. The memories of his arrival nearly five centuries ago remain an integral part of Garhfuljhar's historical and spiritual identity. He said that the donation of five acres of land by the then Raja Bhaina reflects the region's glorious tradition of generosity, devotion, and harmony.

The Chief Minister said that Garhfuljhar is not just a religious site, but a symbol of the shared faith and cultural unity of various communities. This site, which is deeply connected to the sentiments of all communities, including the Sikh community, the Kolta community, and the tribal community, will be comprehensively developed. Our endeavor is to establish Garhfuljhar as a sacred place that, along with spiritual peace, also spreads the message of social harmony and human values.

On this occasion, Chief Minister Shri Sai announced a grant of one crore rupees for the development of Nanak Sagar. He also announced the construction of a fully equipped Ambedkar Bhawan and a public park in the area. The Chief Minister said that these works will provide better facilities for religious, social, and public activities in the area. Furthermore, Garhfuljhar's identity as an important spiritual and tourist center will be further strengthened.

Chief Minister Shri Sai said that Guru Nanak Dev Ji showed all humanity the path of love, compassion, equality, hard work, and service. His message is not limited to any one society or community, but is a message for the welfare of all humanity. The spirit of "Sarbat da Bhalash" inspires us to work for the happiness, prosperity, and well-being of all. Praising the Sikh community's tradition of service, hard work, and philanthropy, the Chief Minister said that the langar service conducted in Gurudwaras is a unique example of social equality and human unity. Here, there is no distinction based on caste, religion, high or low, or economic status.

Two-day Power Ministers' Conference begins in New Delhi

Rs 200 lakh Crore Investment Opportunity in the Power Sector in Next Two Decades

NEW DELHI : OPEN SEARCH



The two-day Power Ministers' Conference commenced in New Delhi today. The conference (November 27-28, 2026) brings together Power Ministers, senior officials and electricity regulators from 28 States and 8 Union Territories and is chaired by Shri Manohar Lal, Union Minister of Power and Housing & Urban Affairs. The last such conference at the national level was held in 2024.

The Conference provides a platform for Centre–State deliberations on key policy priorities and implementation challenges in India's power sector, with discussions focusing on strengthening energy security, improving power infrastructure and accelerating sectoral reforms.

While welcoming the participating State Power Ministers and other dignitaries, Shri Manohar Lal emphasised the need for the Centre and States to work together to develop the power sector. He said that India has made significant progress in expanding generation capacity, integrating renewable energy and strengthening the national grid. The next phase of our journey requires us to move towards a more integrated approach to power sector planning, where generation, storage, transmission and distribution are planned as interconnected elements of a single system. He stressed the necessity for States to implement Smart Meters, which offer significant benefits to consumers. The Minister also stated that, through collaboration with States and initiatives from the Ministry of Power, DISCOMS have achieved profitability after a prolonged period.

The Minister noted that the country's power sector presents investment opportunity of Rs 200 lakh crores over the next two decades, and all stakeholders have to work together to make this possible. We have to work together with the private sector to ensure that we accomplish this, he said.

Shri Manohar Lal complimented the States and DISCOMs, as the DISCOMs as a whole turned a positive PAT during FY 2024-25. He said that we need to ensure that financial position of our DISCOMs is strengthened and necessary changes in policy.

2 Punjab residents booked after 28.65 grams of heroin seized in Himachal's Palampur

PALAMPUR (AGENCY)



The Palampur police have registered a case against two Punjab residents after recovering 28.65 grams of heroin (chitta) from a rented accommodation at Lohna village in Palampur subdivision. According to police sources, a police team was on routine patrol and conducting searches in the area on November 26 when it received a tip-off that two men were allegedly involved in selling heroin to people visiting their rented accommodation.

The accused were identified as Jora, a resident of Dhariwal in Punjab, who was living in a rented room at the house of Madan Lal in Lohna village, and his alleged associate Rajveer, a resident of Lal Quarter, Amritsar, Punjab. Acting on the information, the police team raided the rented accommodation and searched the room occupied by the two suspects. During the search, 28.65 grams of heroin were recovered from their possession. The police subsequently registered an FIR (No. 164/26), dated November 26, under Sections 21 and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at Palampur police station. Further investigation is underway to ascertain the source of the contraband and identify possible links in the drug supply network. In another case, the CIA team of Kangra police has arrested two youths and recovered 5.66 grams of heroin from their possession during a special operation at Indira Colony in Batahan, under the jurisdiction of Panchrukhi police station.

Punjab Assembly elections : Kejriwal, CM Mann attend Shiv Bhajan event in Nangal as AAP eyes Hindu voters

ROPAR (AGENCY)



With the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections approaching, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has stepped up its outreach to Hindu voters in the politically significant Anandpur Sahib Assembly constituency. The party organised, 'Ek Shaam Bhagwan Shiv Ke Naam', in Nangal on Thursday evening to strengthen its connect with the Hindu community and project its commitment towards Sanatan traditions.

AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann attended the religious gathering. Renowned singers Kailash Kher and Hansraj Raghuwanshi sang bhajans dedicated to Lord Shiva, turning the event into a major religious and political spectacle.

The choice of Nangal for the programme assumes political significance as it falls in the Anandpur Sahib Assembly constituency represented by Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains. The constituency has a sizeable Hindu population, particularly in the Nangal region. Addressing the gathering, Kejriwal claimed that no government in the country had done as much for Sanatan Dharma as the Bhagwant Mann-led government in Punjab.

He also announced that the Mata Kali Temple in Patiala was almost ready and would be inaugurated on December 13. Appealing to devotees to attend the inauguration, Kejriwal said the government was committed to facilitating religious and spiritual activities. Highlighting the expansion of the Chief Minister's 'Teerath Yatra Scheme', he said three new pilgrimage routes had been added. These include journeys to Salasar Balaji and Khatu Shyam, Haridwar and Rishikesh, and Mathura and Vrindavan, besides the existing religious destinations of Anandpur Sahib and Sri Darbar Sahib. CM Mann sought to strike an emotional chord with the gathering by recalling his childhood visits to the Mata Naina Devi temple in neighbouring Himachal Pradesh along with Anandpur Sahib.

Mann said that Punjab's tradition of communal harmony shall remain despite attempts by political parties to divide people along religious and caste lines. "This is Punjab, where all religious greetings and slogans are raised together. Punjab is an extremely fertile land. Almost every seed can grow in this soil, but the seed of hatred can never take root here," he said.

People in Punjab celebrated Ram Navami, Gurpurabs, the Parkash Purabs of Guru Ravidas and Eid together, reflecting the state's shared cultural traditions, he said. The CM added that the Nangal region had remained neglected for decades and was treated as an untouchable area by political leaders who visited it only during elections. The AAP government had given the region the recognition and respect it deserved, he said. Mann claimed that about 78,000 government jobs had been provided transparently by his government.

Court shock to Trinamool rebels, Ritabrata Banerjee loses key Assembly post

KOLKATA (AGENCY)



In a shock to the Trinamool rebel camp, the Calcutta High Court has cancelled the appointment of Ritabrata Banerjee as the Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly. Banerjee was picked for the top opposition post in June, over Mamata Banerjee's choice of veteran leader Sobhandeb Chhattopadhyay, after fractures emerged within her party. Justice Krishna Rao held the Speaker's appointment order for Ritabrata Banerjee as unsustainable, and directed him to reconsider and pass a reasoned order. The ruling came on a petition filed by Chattopadhyay, on which a single bench had earlier refused to grant any temporary relief. Chattopadhyay had then appealed to a division bench, which allowed Banerjee to continue as an interim LoP until the suit was decided, and directed the single bench to decide the matter within two months.

Banerjee's rise was the least expected political churn for the Trinamool camp. He emerged as a prominent face in the state politics after fractures appeared within the Trinamool Congress, which had emerged as the main opposition party after the assembly elections earlier this year. Once convinced that it had lost power after three terms, the party found itself in the middle of a chaos that Mamata Banerjee hadn't foreseen even in the recent past. The cracks were exposed when a breakaway section opposed the choice of Chattopadhyay for the Leader of the Opposition post in the Assembly. Ritabrata Banerjee led this breakaway camp and staked claim to the position. On June 3, the Speaker eventually accepted the breakaway camp's representation and recognised Banerjee for the key post.

Rs 2.95 crore lost as fire razes Sanghni market in salooni subdivision

DHARAMSALA (AGENCY)



A devastating fire swept through Sanghni market in the Salooni subdivision of Chamba district late Wednesday night, reducing six houses and seven shops to ashes and leaving 14 families homeless and without their sources of livelihood. The Revenue Department's preliminary assessment has estimated the losses at Rs 2.95 crore. The blaze broke out around 10 pm and quickly engulfed the wooden multi-storey buildings lining the market, leaving residents and shopkeepers with little time to salvage their belongings. A grocery depot, a medical store, a makeshift shop and two vans were also destroyed in the inferno.

Panic gripped the area after a gas cylinder exploded amid the raging flames, further intensifying the blaze. Local residents, assisted by personnel from the Sanghni police post, made desperate efforts to contain the fire. However, residents alleged that the Fire Department reached the spot nearly two-and-a-half hours after being alerted.

Jagan Mohan Reddy's Party adopts wait and watch on delimitation

AMARAVATI (AGENCY)



The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), which supported the Centre's delimitation proposal in principle with some caveats, is adopting a wait-and-watch approach ahead of the proposed special sitting of Parliament. Party president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is yet to take a final call on the revised legislation, NDTV has learnt. "We are waiting for the modified Bill. After going through its provisions, the leadership will decide the party's stand on delimitation," a senior YSRCP source said. The party's caution comes against the backdrop of changing political equations since April. On April 17, when the BJP-led NDA could not gather the two-thirds majority needed to pass the bills, YSRCP parliamentary party leader PV Midhun Reddy told the Lok Sabha, "In principle, we support the bills." The party, however, insisted that the Centre's assurance of a proportionate 50 per cent increase in seats across states be written into the legislation. It reiterated its support in July.

That demand has since been met. The Union Cabinet on Friday cleared a fresh delimitation-linked women's reservation bill that provides for a uniform 50 per cent increase in Lok Sabha seats in all states and extends the freeze on each state's relative share until 2051, news agency PTI reported.

After Patiala-Sangrur bridge collapse, Punjab orders safety audit of all bridges

CHANDIGARH (AGENCY)



Days after the collapse of a national highway bridge on the Patiala-Sangrur road triggered a war of words between the ruling AAP government in Punjab and the BJP-led Centre, the state government has ordered a comprehensive safety inspection of bridges across Punjab. Taking serious note of the incident, Public Works Minister Harbhajan Singh ETO has directed senior field engineering officers of the PWD (B&R) to inspect all bridges falling under their respective jurisdictions and identify any structural deficiencies that could pose a risk to commuters.

The minister has asked the officers to pay particular attention to the condition of foundations, piers, abutments, decks and other critical structural components. Any cracks, deterioration or signs of structural distress must be assessed promptly, with preventive measures initiated wherever necessary. He has also directed the department to engage specialised agencies, reputed technical institutions or structural engineering experts, wherever required, to conduct detailed safety audits and non-destructive testing, particularly of old and vulnerable bridges. Harbhajan Singh ETO emphasised that the exercise should be undertaken on priority and inspection findings, along with recommendations for necessary repairs, strengthening or rehabilitation, should be properly documented to ensure public safety and prevent any untoward incident. A 60-metre-long steel truss bridge over Bhakra Main Line Canal near Passiana village on the Patiala-Sangrur highway collapsed early on November 20, trapping two sand-laden trucks in the mangled structure. One of the vehicles caught fire, leaving its driver injured. The incident occurred around 6 am on the Patiala bypass section of National Highway-64 (now NH-07), the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) said. Parts of the trapped vehicles were left hanging precariously over the canal. The bridge collapse had triggered a political confrontation between the AAP government and BJP, with both sides trading charges over responsibility for the incident and the condition of the national highway infrastructure.

Briefs News

500 cops deployed for Diljit Dosanjh's Mumbai concert after bomb threat

MUMBAI (AGENCY): More than 500 Mumbai police personnel will be deployed at Mahalaxmi Racecourse in Mumbai for actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh's concert on Friday following a threat email warning of possible attacks on the venue and Metro stations, officials said. Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) teams have swept the venue, they said, adding that entry checks will be carried out across all five gates instead of three. Private security personnel have also been roped in to assist police, an official said. An email threatening blasts, grenade attacks and planting of IEDs at the mayor's office, metro rail stations and Dosanjh's concert was received on Thursday, the anniversary of the devastating 26/11 terror attacks. The email, sent by an individual identifying herself as Hannah Meler, contained references to Khalistan, the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as well as threats of violence linked to a programme involving Dosanjh and people associated with the event. In view of the threat, the Mumbai police has deployed around 200 constables, 150 women constables and 75 officers, besides plainclothes personnel stationed around the singer. Dog squads and an Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) team will also remain present at the venue, an official said.Buy Maps He said that a no-car zone extending 500 to 700 metres around the racecourse will be enforced, and parking will not be permitted at the event, though no road diversions have been announced.

Srinagar records coldest night of season at minus 2°C

SRINAGAR (AGENCY): Cold conditions intensified in Kashmir, with Srinagar city recording the coldest coldest night of the season at minus 2°C, officials here said on Friday. This is Srinagar's fourth consecutive coldest night of the season. The minimum temperature last night saw a slight drop from Wednesday night, when it had settled at minus 1.9°C. Pahalgam was the coldest recorded place in Kashmir with a minimum temperature of minus 2.8°C, even though it marked a slight improvement from the previous night's minus 3.2°C. Qazigund, the gateway town to the Valley in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 2.4°C, the meteorological officials said. In north Kashmir, Kupwara recorded a low of minus 1.5°C, while the famous ski resort of Gulmarg in Baramulla district recorded a low of 1°C, they said. The meteorological department has forecast mainly dry weather in the Valley till the end of this month, with a possibility of night temperatures dropping further.

Terrorist arrested with AK-47 in Gujarat, had plans to target Air Force station

AHMEDABAD (AGENCY): In a major counter-terrorism breakthrough, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) has foiled a terror plot by Pakistan-based group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in the state and arrested a 22-year-old operative from Vadodara. The accused, Mohammad Saharul Islam, a resident of Assam's Karimganj, was planning a lone-wolf attack on the air force station in Vadodara, ATS Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Sunil Joshi told reporters on Friday. The operation moved into its final phase on November 23, when agencies received specific intelligence inputs indicating that he was travelling to Gujarat to execute the plot. To evade security tracking and conceal his movements, the accused deliberately avoided direct travel, taking a circuitous route from Assam to Gujarat using multiple trains and buses. Officials also disclosed that this was not his first trip to the state. He visited Vadodara recently to conduct reconnaissance and gather details on sensitive locations across Gujarat for his planned attack. Preliminary investigations indicate that the seized rifle is suspected to have been smuggled into India from Pakistan.

Vijay's party MLA arrested for sending 'Obscene' texts to woman IAS officer

CHENNAI (AGENCY): C Arul Vignesh, a legislator from Tamil Nadu's ruling TVK representing the Kallakurichi Assembly constituency, was arrested from his home on Friday evening in connection with a sexual harassment complaint filed by a woman IAS officer over some text messages he sent to her, police said. The arrest of the 36-year-old MLA comes four days after the formal complaint was lodged on November 23, and 117 days after the initial incident reportedly occurred.

Sports Ministry gears up for 100th edition of Fit India Sundays on Cycle on Nov 29

NEW DELHI (AGENCY)

Launched in December 2024, following the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make India a fitter and healthier nation, Fit India Sundays on Cycle has grown into a nationwide movement, bringing together people from all walks of life to promote fitness through cycling. The initiative began with just 250 locations and 500 participants in New Delhi.



Over two years, Sundays on Cycle has grown into a people's movement. Its 99th edition, held on the theme of Constitution Day, saw lakhs of citizens participate at more than 26,000 locations across the country, according to a press release from MYAS. Marking a significant milestone in this journey, the movement is now gearing up for the celebration of its 100th edition of Sundays on Cycle. The landmark edition of Sundays on Cycle is dedicated to celebrating the Olympic Movement in India, under the theme #IndiaReady4Olympics. Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya will lead the 100th Sundays on Cycle celebrations from Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, where around 50,000 cyclists are expected to join the movement. In association with MY Bharat, the 100th Sundays on Cycle will be celebrated by young people in every district across the country. Additionally, the celebrations will be organised across 100 prominent iconic locations nationwide, where 100 Indian Olympians will join in on the milestone celebration to pedal towards making India a fitter nation.

Marking a significant milestone in this journey, the movement is now gearing up for the celebration of its 100th edition of Sundays on Cycle

The upcoming edition will celebrate the values at the heart of the Olympic Movement: good governance and integrity, fair competition and inclusion, the health and welfare of athletes, and a lasting legacy of sustainability and safe sport. It reflects India's commitment to building its sporting future on ethics, athlete voice and equal opportunity for all, including women and para-athletes, and seeks to inspire the youth to embrace sport and fitness as a way of life. The movement takes inspiration from the Prime Minister's call of "Fitness ka Dose, Aadha Ghanta Roz", with the aim of dedicating at least half an hour to fitness every day. The initiative has evolved into a platform for taking forward Prime Minister Narendra Modi's key national calls and social messages, translating them into action through mass public participation. Through special editions centred on themes such as Fight Against Obesity, Nasha Mukt Bharat, Pollution Ka Solution, Sundays on Cycle seeks to encourage behavioural change and inspire citizens to contribute to the Prime Minister's vision of a Fit India and a Viksit Bharat.

Rohit Sharma returns to captain Mumbai Indians after 3 seasons

MUMBAI (AGENCY)

Five-time champions Mumbai Indians on Friday reinstated talismanic Rohit Sharma as captain ahead of the 2027 Indian Premier League, hoping to snap their modest run in recent years.Buy Maps Rohit, who led Mumbai to five IPL titles, will succeed Hardik Pandya after the all-rounder joined Punjab Kings in a trade involving pacer Arshdeep Singh. "I am ready for the 20th season (of the IPL), for the challenges ahead and for giving our Paltan plenty of moments to celebrate. The focus will be on playing our brand of cricket, competing together and enjoying the game," Rohit said in a release issued by Mumbai Indians. "Mumbai Indians has been a huge part of my life, and leading this team has always been something I have taken great pride in.



"The conversations with Nita (Ambani) bhabhi and Akash (Ambani) about the season ahead have been exciting, and I have a lot of belief in what we can achieve," he added. Rohit, who became MI captain in 2013, was removed from the franchise's leadership role after IPL 2023, and Pandya was named his replacement. Under the 39-year-old, Mumbai won IPL titles in 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020, besides the now-defunct Champions League T20 (CLT20) in 2013. After winning the trophy in 2020, the Mumbai outfit largely experienced poor outings in the league. They finished fifth in 2021, 10th in 2022 and were ousted in Qualifier 2 in 2023, prompting the MI management to change the skipper. However, Mumbai did not fare any better under Pandya either, ending up 10th in 2024 and ninth in 2026.

In 2025, they managed to enter Qualifier 2 before being eliminated. After a third straight title-less season under Pandya, it was clear that MI would let go of the star cricketer. They initiated talks with multiple franchises, including Gujarat Titans, Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings, for a trade arrangement before eventually arriving at a mutual transfer agreement with Punjab Kings. Once Pandya was offloaded, MI decided to turn to Rohit, their most successful skipper.

Briefs News

Gukesh finds his mojo, pushes Sindarov into time trouble as Game 3 turns into a fight

CHANDIGARH (AGENCY): After two bloodless draws, Game 3 of the World Chess Championship on Thursday was a proper fight. Defending champion D Gukesh seems to have found his mojo and landed the first blows, and challenger Javokhir Sindarov made his 40th move with only seconds left on his clock. The 60-move game, which lasted nearly five hours, still ended in a draw, the third in a row. The match is level at 1.5-1.5 going into Friday's rest day. Gukesh sprang a surprise came early. Playing Black, he again chose the Berlin Defence like the first game but with a twist similar to what he did against Ding Liren in last championship match. Instead, he went for 5...Be7, the rarely seen Rio de Janeiro variation. He blitzed out his first 15 moves in two minutes and 12 seconds. For the first time in the match, it was Sindarov, not Gukesh, who was fighting the clock. "Today my opponent was really well prepared," Sindarov admitted at the post-game press conference, admitting his team had not looked deeply at the line. Boris Spassky had played it in 1988, and Gukesh joked about it when asked. "Spassky is not one of my seconds," he said at the press conference, before conceding he knew the game. Gukesh exchanged queens on move 16 after a think of about 11 minutes, then built pressure on the kingside with ...h5 and ...g5. Grandmaster Judit Polgar, commentating on the Salesforce Fide live braodcast called his king move 21...Kd7 "the coolest move of the world championship so far". Sindarov was not the one to let Gukesh had free run. He hit back. His 29.f4 break made the position sharp and forced Gukesh to find accurate defensive moves.

Marc Marquez announces MotoGP retirement days after eighth world title

VALENCIA (AGENCY): Spanish motorcycle racing legend Marc Marquez has announced his shock retirement from MotoGP, just days after securing his eighth premier-class world championship title, bringing an end to one of the most illustrious careers in the sport. According to ESPN, the 33-year-old Ducati rider made the surprise announcement during the first practice session of the season-ending Valencia Grand Prix on Friday, revealing that this weekend's race would be his last in MotoGP. In an emotional moment broadcast live from the Ducati garage, Marquez used a series of cue cards to communicate his decision, in a style reminiscent of the famous 'Love Actually' scene. The cards carried the message: "We'll talk later, but first ... Thank you to everyone who's been part of this journey ... I hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have. ... This will be my last race in MotoGP. ... We made history." The announcement came as a major surprise, particularly as Marquez had signed a two-year contract extension with Ducati in June, which was expected to keep him in the championship for the next two seasons. Marquez recently secured his eighth premier-class title at the Portuguese Grand Prix, drawing level with legendary Italian rider Giacomo Agostini in the all-time championship standings and moving one ahead of former rival Valentino Rossi. His latest triumph was particularly remarkable given the challenges he faced during the season. The Spaniard missed the Catalan Grand Prix in May following surgery and was trailing the championship leader by 102 points after the subsequent round in Italy. However, he produced a remarkable comeback to clinch the title, securing back-to-back championships with Ducati after winning his seventh crown last year.

Ayaan Vaziralli wins maiden PSA Tour title with comeback victory in Doha

DOHA (AGENCY): India's Ayaan Vaziralli clinched his maiden Professional Squash Association (PSA) Tour title after producing a spirited comeback to defeat Egypt's Hassan Menshawy 3-1 in the final of the QSF 5 Challenger here on Thursday. The top-seeded Indian, ranked 173rd in the world, recovered from a game down to beat fourth seed and world No. 216 Menshawy 7-11, 11-7, 11-9, 11-2 in the summit clash, according to Olympics.com. The 20-year-old made a slow start as Menshawy took control of the opening game with some aggressive play. However, Vaziralli responded strongly in the second game, finding his rhythm and improving his court coverage to level the contest. The Indian then edged a closely fought third game to take the lead before dominating the fourth 11-2 to seal the title in convincing fashion. Vaziralli was the only Indian squash player competing in the tournament in Doha and enjoyed an impressive run, dropping just two games throughout his campaign.

Jadeja's spin could have helped India in second Test, says Sunil Gavaskar

CHRISTCHURCH (AGENCY)

Batting great Sunil Gavaskar felt India erred by leaving out Ravindra Jadeja for the second Test against New Zealand, arguing that the all-rounder's spin could have proved valuable on the final two days of the match. Jadeja and pace spearhead Mohammed Siraj were left out of the playing XI for the second successive Test, with India instead handing a debut to fast bowler Gurnoor Brar. "Well, I mean, you're talking about Siraj. What about Jadeja? He's number three there with 33 wickets, and I do believe that his spin would have been pretty useful on the fourth and fifth days because he gives the ball a fair tweak," Gavaskar told the host broadcaster. "He's not somebody who will toss the ball up, but he's known to get the ball to grip and turn, even on the most placid of pitches." Gavaskar, who had earlier questioned Siraj's omission from the first Test, said that being overlooked again would be disappointing for both experienced players.

Jamie Overton's five-for powers England to seven-wicket win over Australia in third T20I

BRISBANE (AGENCY)

Jamie Overton produced a sensational five-wicket haul as England bowled out Australia for their lowest-ever home T20I total before securing a rain-affected seven-wicket victory in the third match to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series here. Overton returned figures of 5/12 from four overs, becoming only the second England bowler to claim a five-wicket haul in men's T20Is, as Australia were dismissed for 108 in 16.5 overs at the Gabba. Liam Dawson provided excellent support with



3/16, leaving the hosts struggling to recover after losing wickets at regular intervals. Australia's previous batting collapses were compounded by the inability of their top-order batters to convert promising starts.

Sam Harper top-scored with 26 off 14 deliveries, while Mitchell Marsh and Jake Fraser-McGurk also showed brief aggression but failed to build substantial partnerships. Dawson provided England with the breakthrough by dismissing Marsh, who was caught brilliantly by Overton at mid-on. The left-arm spinner then removed Harper, again with Overton completing an excellent catch.

Fraser-McGurk struck two sixes before becoming Overton's first victim. The England pacer subsequently dismissed Tim David, Nikhil Chaudhary, who had earlier been struck on the helmet by a bouncer, and Ben Dwarshuis to complete his five-wicket haul. Dawson returned to remove Adam Zampa, while Mitch Owen was run out attempting a second run.

IWL 2026-27: Nita FA produce five-star performance to beat Juba Sangha FC

KOLKATA (AGENCY)

Nita Football Academy cruised to a 5-0 win over Juba Sangha FC in the Indian Women's League (IWL) 2026-27 first encounter of the day at the Kalyani Stadium on Friday. Neha (45+2') broke the deadlock before Pratima Bangal (52'), Nongmeikapam Sibani Devi (83'), Matilda Kwao (89') and Khumukcham Bhumika Devi (90+2') completed the rout in the second half, according to a press release from IWL. It was an engaging start to the contest with both teams tussling for possession in a fierce midfield battle. Juba Sangha FC manufactured the first opportunity of the game with Vipanshi hitting the post in the 3rd minute. She continued to pose a challenge to the Nita FA defence in the opening exchanges. However, Nita FA grew into the game and began to find their passing rhythm, with their midfielders dictating the tempo. They carved open the Juba Sangha FC defence on a couple of occasions but lacked the finishing touch. The best of those chances fell to Neha, who failed to hit the target from close range. Nita FA were eventually rewarded for their persistence on the



stroke of half-time, when Neha atoned for her earlier miss by finishing off a devastating counter-attack to give her side a 1-0 lead at the break. The side from Odisha picked up where they had left off, doubling their lead shortly after the restart. Pratima rose highest from a corner in the 52nd minute and found the back of the net with a towering header. Nita FA continued to build on that momentum with their relentless high press and added a third in the 83rd minute.

Matilda Kwao's exceptional hold-up play set up the chance for Sibani, who made no mistake from the edge of the box. Neha then turned provider in the 89th minute, making a scintillating run down the left channel before finding Matilda in the six-yard box for the simplest of tap-ins. Bhumi rounded up a sensational display for her side in the ninetieth minute. She added a fifth as she arrived late in the box to finish off a well-rounded move, further adding to Juba Sangha's misery. The commanding win takes them to the top of the table with six points from two matches, level with Sethu FC and East Bengal FC but ahead on goal difference.

NZ vs IND, 2nd Test : Blundell-Phillips take New Zealand to 246/5 at day one end



CHRISTCHURCH (AGENCY)

A steady unbeaten half-century partnership between Tom Blundell and Glenn Phillips helped New Zealand recover from a middle-order collapse and reach 246/5 at stumps on Day 1 of the second Test against India in Christchurch on Friday. Blundell (53*) and Phillips (36*) stitched together an unbeaten 62-run partnership after New Zealand were reduced to 184/5, ensuring that the hosts finished the day on a relatively strong note without losing another wicket. Mitchell and Blundell saw off some overs from Jasprit Bumrah and Gurnoor Brar, collecting a few rare odd fours, bringing up NZ's 150-run mark in 59.4 overs. In the next over, Blundell got a couple of fours against Washington Sundar, bringing up their 50-run stand in 105 balls.

Mitchell also got a couple of fours against Akash Deep, before he handed a catch to Dhruv Jurel in slips off a Washington delivery. He was gone for a 74-ball 31, with four boundaries. NZ was 184/5 in 64.4 overs. The duo stitched a 50-run stand in just 85 balls, with Blundell reaching his fifty in 114 balls, with five fours, helping Kiwis play out the remaining session without any loss of wickets. Earlier, a two-wicket spell from Akash Deep helped India make a comeback as they got three crucial New Zealand wickets in the second session of day one of the second Test at Christchurch on Friday. Latham started off positively, getting two boundaries in two overs, reaching his 32nd Test fifty in 88 balls, with five fours. Latham and Henry Nicholls continued to drive the innings forward, with Latham punching an Akash Deep delivery to help NZ get to the 100-run mark in 36 overs. Akash Deep produced the crucial wicket of Latham, getting him to nick one to Rishabh Pant behind the stumps for 59 off 128 balls, with six fours. NZ was 110/2 in 41.3 overs. Anshul Kamboj got Henry Nicholls as well, with the batter top-edging his delivery and his attempt to pull going to Akash Deep standing at long-leg. The Wellington hero was gone for 16 in 46 balls, reducing Kiwis to 110/3.

In the next over, India produced the wicket of Rachin Ravindra for a nine-ball duck, with Akash Deep making Rachin poke into the delivery, which landed into Rishabh's gloves behind the stumps. NZ was 110/4. Mitchell and Blundell managed to survive some shouts from Jasprit Bumrah and Kamboj, playing out the session safely. Earlier, debutant Gurnoor Brar, however, provided the visitors with a timely breakthrough on the final delivery before the interval. After winning the toss and electing to bowl, India were expected to exploit the conditions, with the fresh surface offering considerable assistance to the seamers. However, despite some early movement and swing, the Indian pacers failed to exert sustained pressure on the New Zealand opening pair during the first session. New Zealand skipper Tom Latham led the hosts' charge, remaining unbeaten on 42 at the lunch break. He was given solid support by Devon Conway, who scored 31 off 79 deliveries before Brar dismissed him with the final ball of the session.





IFFI Campus: Beyond Cinema

IFFI Campus Offers an Experience Beyond Cinema, Celebrating India's Creative and Cultural Diversity

Festival Reaffirms Commitment to an Inclusive Experience for All in Collaboration with Svayam

OS CORRESPONDENT

At the ongoing 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Panaji, the festival experience extends well beyond the silver screen. The IFFI campus has evolved into a vibrant meeting ground for creative institutions, cultural initiatives, regional cuisines, local products, merchandise and accessibility initiatives. Together, these diverse offerings provide delegates, filmmakers, students and visitors with an opportunity to discover and engage with India's rich creative and cultural landscape.

Advancing Accessibility and Inclusion

An important feature of the campus is the awareness initiative by Svayam, an organisation working towards dignity and accessibility for persons with reduced mobility. Participating at IFFI for the second time, Svayam is drawing attention to the need for accessible public spaces and the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural and social activities. The initiative complements accessibility arrangements across the festival venue, reinforcing the importance of making cultural experiences accessible and welcoming to all.

Showcasing India's Creative and Educational Ecosystem

The festival campus also serves as a platform for institutions working across creative technology, cinema, performing arts and design to present their initiatives and interact with visitors. The Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT), Mumbai, India's National Centre of Excellence for Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR), is also engaging visitors through an animation character-making competition. Its merchandise display further introduces visitors to the possibilities and growing opportunities within the creative technology sector. The Directorate of Publications Division (DPD) is presenting a collection of publications on Indian cinema, alongside its iconic Gandhian series. Special discounts on select titles are adding to the appeal, encouraging visitors to explore its literary offerings.





The participation of the SA Film Academy, Chennai; Dada Lakshmi Chand State University of Performing and Visual Arts, Rohtak, Haryana; and JD Institute of Fashion Technology further reflects the breadth of academic and professional disciplines contributing to India's expanding media, entertainment and creative industries.

A taste of regional diversity

Food stalls add another dimension to the campus experience, bringing together a variety of regional and popular choices. ranging from traditional Naga cuisine and biryani to dosa, coffee and bakery products. Adding a distinct Goan touch, the Goa Forest Development Corporation Limited is showcasing locally sourced cashew nuts, highlighting the region's indigenous produce. Merchandise outlets offer visitors a range of festival memorabilia and creative products. The Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, is displaying clothing and accessories, while the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG) is also presenting its own collection of merchandise.

Entertainment beyond the Big Screen

Extending the festival experience into the digital and broadcast space, Prime Video, Story TV App and BIG FM are also participating through their respective stalls. Their presence offers visitors an opportunity to engage with diverse formats and platforms across the evolving media and entertainment landscape. Stall operators appreciated the support extended by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Entertainment Society of Goa and the National Film Development Corporation in facilitating their participation. With its mix of creative institutions, regional flavours, local products, entertainment platforms and accessibility initiatives, the IFFI campus offers visitors a space to discover, interact and engage with the many facets of India's cultural and creative landscape.

Bride trafficking : A story of exploitation

'Paro : The Untold Story of Bride Slavery' Explores the Plight of Women Caught in the Web of Bride Trafficking

Actor-Producer and Screenplay writer Trupti Bhoir brings a hard-hitting story of exploitation, gender inequality and women's rights to the 57th IFFI



VIJAY KUMAR.OPEN SEARCH

The Untold Story of Bride Slavery, featured in the Indian Panorama section of the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), brings to light the disturbing and largely underreported practice of buying and selling women as brides, particularly in Mewat, Haryana. The term 'Paro' is used in the region to refer to women who are bought or sold into marriage.

Speaking in a press conference, actor and producer Trupti Bhoir shared that, she has undertaken 4.5 years of research to make this film, which is her second Oscar-listed film. In an unusual creative journey in this film, Trupti Bhoir has taken on the triple responsibility of producer, screenplay writer and protagonist.

The idea for the film emerged from Trupti Bhoir's exposure to documentaries and media reports highlighting the practice of bride slavery in India. Known for films centred on women's issues and rights, she was deeply disturbed by the realities she encountered. With the help of an NGO, Bhoir and her mother visited the villages disguised as journalists. They met around 62–63 women subjected to bride slavery, hailing from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi. Bhoir remarked that the bride trade is rooted in gender inequality and poverty. One of the most disturbing accounts uncovered during the research was that of a girl aged approximately 11–13 years, who had reportedly been sold for a meager amount. This young girl's story became the inspiration for the protagonist of the film, a character portrayed by Trupti Bhoir herself. Through this character, the filmmaker seeks to bring to the screen the pain, helplessness and brutal exploitation experienced by countless women whose stories often remain unheard.

IFFI 2026: The search for a place called home

Building a Home Away from Home: 'Paris Paris' Explores Displacement, Identity and Belonging

Belgian filmmaker Isabelle Tollenaere discusses migration and the universal search for a place to call home, at IFFI 2026



OS CORRESPONDENT

Belgian filmmaker Isabelle Tollenaere shared insights into her film Paris Paris, its creative journey and the themes of migration, displacement and belonging at a press conference organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) during the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa today. Featured in the International Cinema category, the film explores the meaning of home through the lives of three men living in the French capital.

Set in a building in Paris, Paris Paris follows three men from different backgrounds as they attempt to build a home for themselves in a squatted apartment. Sharing limited resources and exchanging conversations about their past and future, the men navigate questions of identity, displacement and belonging, bringing out the human experiences that connect people across cultures. Expressing her delight at visiting India for the first time, Tollenaere described the opportunity to present her film at IFFI as an honour. She recalled that the screening held the previous day had received an encouraging response, with the auditorium filled to capacity. The engaging question-and-answer session that followed provided an opportunity to interact with Indian audiences and understand their perspectives on the film. Speaking about her creative approach, Tollenaere explained how her background in documentary filmmaking shaped her casting choices. She selected individuals whose personal histories and lived experiences resonated with those of the characters they portray, bringing authenticity and depth to the narrative. g locations. Sharing the personal inspiration behind the film, she revealed that her grandparents were immigrants, an experience that shaped her interest in migration, displacement and the search for belonging. Expressing her hopes for the film, Tollenaere said she would love to see it travel across countries and cultures, connecting with audiences around the world through its universal themes and shared human experiences.

IFFI 2026: When two worlds collide

'One Person's Holiday, Another's Home': When two worldscollide in a few days in the Sun at IFFI 2026

A Thriller from Mexico's Riviera Maya asks how Privilege and the Struggle to Survive can Bring People Closer than they Expect

OS CORRESPONDENT

At a press conference held at the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa today, director Mauro Mueller, writer José David Figueroa García and producer Leslie Holleran discussed their bilingual film A Few Days in the Sun, featured in the Cinema of the World section. The interaction offered insights into the film's making and creative vision.



In Mexico's Riviera Maya, a wealthy European couple uses illegal ways to force a local community off the land planned for development. Meanwhile, a working-class Mexican family makes a risky deal with a corrupt police officer to keep a teenager out of prison. When their paths cross, both couples become involved in a violent kidnapping that quickly spirals out of control. Trapped in a harsh landscape, they must face the consequences of their actions and discover how privilege and the struggle to survive can bring them closer than they expected. The film is an international co-production across five countries (Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Germany, the USA and Switzerland), in two languages (English and Spanish).

At its core is a simple idea: one person's holiday is another person's home and daily life. What happens when these two worlds collide? Mueller spoke about how much of his own life shaped the story and its perspective. He grew up in Switzerland and has also lived in Mexico and the USA. He believes that travelling and living in different countries is necessary to cultivate empathy, and to learn that there is no one way of living, and that no way of living is better or worse than another. Knowing languages and travelling, he added, helps us understand why people make different choices, and recognise how the systems and institutions around them shape the consequences of those same choices.

Mueller is no stranger to IFFI. His earlier film The Janitor (El Conserje) had its world premiere at the 56th IFFI in Goa in November 2025. García emphasised the clash of cultures and social classes, a contrast that the film brings out clearly. He pointed out that when similar decisions are made, the wealthy European characters do not face the consequences that the working-class couple do, whose lives change drastically. Holleran echoed this, saying that for a poor person even the smallest mistake can bring everything crashing down. In the film, those holding the captives and the captives themselves are all, in a way, imprisoned by their circumstances.

García also explored how corruption runs through every level of society. At lower levels it is blunter, like bribery, while the wealthy couple's attempt to illegally move a community off a piece of land is a higher-level corruption tied to power and politics, which is generally accepted. The film tries to place both kinds of corruption on the same level. Mueller and García also spoke about the widening inequality in the world, and how people are classified by their socio-economic class.

Mueller said the film aims to build empathy for why people make the morally grey choices they do. He chose the thriller genre to reach a newer and broader audience than a pure drama might. The result, he said, is a "character-driven thriller" standing at the border of arthouse and commercial cinema.

A aale of resilience and human dignity

The Hug of Emptiness Explores Human Dignity, Resilience, and the Enduring Quest for Justice

What Makes a Life Meaningful? Kannada Documentary at 57th IFFI Seeks Answers in the Forest

Kannada filmmaker Shri Pradeep Kumar Shetty K, also known as Dr. Pradeep Kenchanuru, addressed a press conference organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) in Goa today. He spoke about his documentary The Hug of Emptiness, featured in the Non-Feature Films section of Indian Panorama at the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI). Made in 2025, the 20-minute film explores happiness, human dignity, and resilience through the life of a man who makes his home in a secluded forest after losing his property. The film won the FIPRESCI International Critics Prize at the 19th Mumbai International Film Festival earlier this year. The film follows Chandrashekhar, whose property, mortgaged



to the Sullia Cooperative Bank in Karnataka, was taken over in 2003 after he was unable to repay a loan. Contesting the action, he embarked on a legal battle that has continued for over two decades. Meanwhile, he made a secluded stretch of forest his home, sustaining himself by weaving and selling baskets made from vines gathered there. His story brings together questions of justice, displacement, solitude, and human resilience. Explaining what drew him to the subject, Shri Shetty said it was Chandrashekhar's philosophy of life, rather than the legal dispute alone, that inspired the documentary. Despite living amid dense forests, heavy rainfall, and wildlife, without basic amenities such as electricity and roads, Chandrashekhar has found a rhythm and sense of purpose in everyday life. The director reflected that happiness could take different forms and need not always be defined by material comforts.