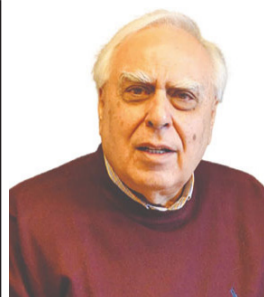


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## BRIEFLY

### LG, CM express grief over loss of lives in accident in Ganderbal

JAMMU, Mar 23 (Agencies): Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah have expressed their grief over the deaths of four people in a road accident in Jammu and Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Sunday. Jammu travel packages

Seventeen people were also injured in the accident involving a bus and a taxi on the Srinagar-Sonamarg road.

"I am deeply saddened to learn about the loss of precious lives in a tragic road accident in Ganderbal today," the LG said in his condolence message.

"My sincere condolences to the bereaved families in this hour of grief. Praying for the early recovery of the injured," he added.

The chief minister took to X to condole the deaths in the accident and said the authorities concerned are providing all possible assistance to those injured.

"Deeply saddened by the tragic road accident on highway near Gund, Kangan, which has claimed several lives and left many others injured. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. Praying for the swift recovery of the injured. Authorities are providing all possible assistance," Abdullah said.

### Kashmiri Pandits pay tributes to 2003 LeT attack victims in Nadimarg Village

SRINAGAR, Mar 23 (Agencies): A group of Kashmiri Pandits on Sunday paid tributes to their brethren killed by Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists at Nadimarg village in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district in 2003.

While Kashmiri Pandits have been paying tributes to the 24 victims in Jammu every year, this was the first time that the community held the programme at the scene of the incident.

LeT terrorists, dressed in combat uniforms, cordoned off the Nadimarg village on the intervening night of March 22 and 23. They rounded off all men and shot them dead after lining them up in the open.

**Turn to page 9**

## Religion-Based reservation violates Constitution: RSS

BENGALURU, Mar 23 (Agencies): Amid the ongoing debate over the Karnataka government's decision to provide a 4 per cent reservation for Muslims in government contracts, RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale on Sunday asserted that the Constitution does not allow religion-based quota.

He also said such reservations go against the architect of our Constitution, B R Ambedkar.

Addressing reporters here on the concluding day of Akhil Bharatiya



Pratinidhi Sabha, the highest decision making body of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Hosabale said,

"Religion-based reservation is not accepted in the Constitution authored by Babasaheb Ambedkar. Anybody

doing it is going against the architect of our Constitution." He also pointed out that previous attempts by United Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra to introduce religion-based reservations for Muslims were set aside by the High Courts and Supreme Court.

Hosabale emphasised that the courts have rejected provisions for such quota.

Responding to a query about the controversy over 17th

**Turn to page 9**

## Four tourists killed in road accident in central Kangan



SRINAGAR, Mar 23 (Agencies): Four people, including three members of a family from Mumbai, lost their lives, and 21 others sustained injuries in a road accident in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Sunday

morning, officials said. The accident occurred near a CRPF camp at Gund when a passenger bus and an Etios vehicle collided head-on, leaving at least two dozen people injured. The Etios car, which was carrying

tourists, suffered severe damage, resulting in the death of four occupants, including the driver.

Officials identified the deceased as Hetal Ashish Pari, Nikki Ashish, and Leisha Ashish, all residents of Satya Nagar, Borivali West, Mumbai. The fourth victim was the driver of the vehicle, Faheem Ahmad Badyari of Soiteng, Srinagar.

Following the accident, locals and rescue teams rushed to the spot, shifting the injured to Sub-District Hospital (SDH)

**Turn to page 9**

## Tourism-related infrastructure being developed along Mughal Road in J&K

JAMMU, Mar 23 (Agencies): The Jammu and Kashmir government plans to develop tourism-related infrastructure at several scenic locations along the Mughal road, which connects Poonch and Rajouri with south Kashmir's Shopian, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has said. Jammu travel packages

Dubjan, Mughal Sarai, Peer-ki-Gali and Shakroo Keller located on the Mughal Road are known for their natural beauty and scenic landscapes, making them promising destinations for tourism development, Abdullah, who is also minister in-charge Tourism, said.

The chief minister gave the information in a written reply to an unstarred

question by independent MLA Shabir Ahmad Kullay in the Assembly on Saturday.

Kullay represents Shopian constituency and has sought information about the steps proposed to be taken for providing tourism related infrastructure along the Mughal road to attract more tourists there.

Abdullah said the tour-

ism department has undertaken various initiatives to develop tourism-related infrastructure in the area.

The department has already developed various tourism-related infrastructure in Shopian at sanctioned cost of Rs 6.32 crore under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, he said, adding under the

**Turn to page 9**

## Punjab Police says Narco-Terror module busted, 4 men held with 4 Kg heroin

CHANDIGARH, Mar 23 (Agencies): The Punjab Police Sunday said it has busted a narco-terror module with the arrest of four people and recovered 4 kg of heroin from them.

Punjab police chief Gaurav Yadav said an FIR has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act at the State Special Operations Cell (SSOC), Amritsar.



"In an intelligence-led operation, Counter-Intelligence, Amritsar, busts a narco-terror module and apprehends four

persons and recovers 4 kg of heroin from their possession," he posted on X.

**Turn to page 9**

## Terrorist hideout unearthed in Doda

JAMMU, Mar 23 (Agencies): A terrorist hideout was unearthed in a remote forest area in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, leading to recovery of a pistol and some ammunition, officials said on Sunday.

The hideout was unearthed during a joint search operation by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of local police and Army in Bhalra forest area of

Bhaderwah on Saturday, the officials said.

A pistol, its three magazines and six rounds and 25 rounds of AK assault rifle were recovered from the hideout, they said, adding no one was arrested during the operation which was conducted on a specific intelligence input following reports of suspicious movement.

Meanwhile, the officials said a joint search oper-

ation by police, army and CRPF is also underway in Gurinal, Thathri and Chatroo forest in adjoining Kishtwar district. Jammu and Kashmir travel guide

The operation was launched on Thursday after some villagers shared information about the presence of suspected terrorists in the higher reaches, they said.

**Turn to page 9**

## Rs 22 crore spent, 15 years gone: Check dam project remains incomplete in Kathua



JAMMU, Mar 23 (Agencies): Fifteen years after its inception and with Rs 22 crore already spent, a check dam project aimed at conserving water and supporting irrigation remains incomplete in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir.

The issue was raised by BJP's Bharat Bhushan in the assembly through an unstarred question on Saturday, seeking information about the present status of the project and the government's response to complete the 30 per cent balance work.

**Turn to page 9**

# GupShup

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## Lieutenant Governor inaugurates Tawi Filmotsva, a short film festival dedicated to promote local talents

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today inaugurated the 'Tawi Filmotsva', organised by J&K Cine Association, at Abhinav Theatre Jammu.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations to the organizers, participating Film-makers, and everyone associated with the short film festival dedicated to promote local talents.

"Cinema is an effective medium of education and a powerful agent of social change. I want our local talent to maintain a balance between entertainment and social concern and use this powerful medium for the benefit of society and social transformation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor spoke on the progressive Film policy and other key interventions made by the government to create a vibrant



film ecosystem in J&K.

"Today I am proud that Jammu Kashmir has found its place in film-making. Our efforts of peace and development in the past five years have made Jammu Kashmir more attractive destination for Hindi, Regional and Foreign film shooting," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He highlighted that the Technological advancement has helped the

local budding film-makers, actors and professionals in different fields of Cinema to showcase our rich and varied cultural heritage.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon the film-makers and artists of Jammu Kashmir to raise awareness about social issues and promote positive change through their creative endeavours.

The Lieutenant Gov

ernor said, "Creativity is not only be a source of fulfilling your dream, but it is also a vehicle for social change. I have seen the deep impact of different creative genres on society but the impact of Cinema is unparalleled and they have helped in raising awareness on many social evils.

I want our youth to nurture this creativity to eliminate social evils

like drug addiction from society and use the creative talents for good deeds that will change the lives of others. I want our youth to help the government in reaching out to the disadvantaged and ensure their life of dignity".

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor released a brochure of 'Tawi Filmotsva'. He also commended the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL) for its constant efforts to promote artistic and cultural heritage of Jammu Kashmir.

Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Sh Nitish Rajora, Director Information; Ms Harvinder Kour, Secretary JKAACL; Sh Dharminder Kohli, President, J&K Cine Association; senior officials, renowned artists, film-makers, members of J&K Cine Association and prominent citizens from different walks of life were present.

## FFMA pays tributes to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukh-



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Freedom Fighters Memorial Association (FFMA) organized a programme to remember freedom fighters Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev at Maheshpura Chowkn, Jammu.

The programme was presided over by the Association Chairman, Rajiv Mahajan while Patron-in-chief, Ved Gandotra was also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Rajiv Mahajan said

that India today needs the principles of the late freedom fighters like never before.

Rajiv Mahajan, while paying glorious tributes to Bhagat Singh who laid down his life for the sacred cause of freedom at a young age, said that the ideals and principles of Bhagat Singh must act as a torch bearer for the youth in today's society in which people are playing good and fragmenting humankind based on caste, creed, and religion.

He added that the

young generation of India will always continue to draw inspiration from these great revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives with smiles on their faces for the freedom of the country.

Saluting their martyrdom, Rajiv Mahajan observed that the sacrifices made by the revolutionaries in India's freedom struggle would always inspire the youth to serve selflessly toward the better interest of the nation.

"The generations will forever remember their sacrifice and courage to come," he added.

Others present on the occasion included Among others present were R.C Puri (Vice Chairman), S.S Bhalwal (President, FFMA), J.J Singh (General Secretary), Pritam Sharma, K.L Verma, Nirmal Kishore, Prabhat Kapahi (Office Secretary) and others.

## CS Dulloo receives prestigious 'Diamond States Award' at Diamond States Summit 2025 in New Delhi

### Top News Report

JAMMU /NEW DELHI, Mar 23: In a moment of great pride for entire Jammu & Kashmir, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo was today honoured with the prestigious Diamond States Award at the grand finale of Diamond States Summit 2025, organized by News18 India.

The award was presented by Jyoti Kamal, Managing Editor, News18 India to Atal Dulloo in recognition of J&K's exemplary performance in governance, development and progressive initiatives during the past few years.

In this regard the Chief Secretary expressed gratitude for the recognition and dedicated the award to the people of Jammu & Kashmir and the collective efforts of the Administration.

He highlighted the efforts made by the Gov



ernment of J&K in collaboration with Central Government in ushering an era of peace, prosperity and development. He spoke about various initiatives like bringing governance to door

steps of people besides several other welfare measures for common masses.

He also enumerated the steps that resulted in enhancing the influx of tourists to J&K which rose to more than two

crore. He also gave credit to the new connectivity measures like tunnels, highways, railways and enhanced air connectivity for this feat.

He reiterated the commitment of government

of Jammu & Kashmir to furthering its agenda of growth, peace and prosperity, ensuring a brighter future for its citizens.

The Diamond States Summit 2025 witnessed participation of eminent policymakers, industry leaders, and experts, highlighting the achievements of states and UTs in governance, social welfare, and economic progress. Jammu & Kashmir's recognition at this prestigious platform reaffirms its commitment to transformative governance and development.

## Natrang presents Hindi comedy play 'Chor'

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Natrang presented a scintillating performance of Hindi comedy play 'Chor' which has been written by Rajindra Kumar Sharma and directed by Neeraj Kant at Natrang Studio Theatre in its Sunday Theatre Series. Equipped with situational comedy and surprise elements, the play received

applauds at different punches and dialogues. A dramatic household incident was presented in a much theatrical manner. In the play, one 'Nareesh' is in sound sleep in the middle of the night which got disrupted by some unexpected noise in the room. To his dismay, he finds a girl in a thief's guise who threatens him to surrender money on gun-point. He pleaded for mercy, but the thief was undeterred and appeared hard core profes



sional. But incidentally, he was able to grab the gun from her and tries to scare her but to his surprise, it was a fake gun. The girl changed her tone and started blackmailing him, saying she will shout and blame him for molestation, if he does not surrenders money. Hearing the hue and cry, Nareesh's brother-in-law and wife appeared from the next room and showed their displeasure over the closed room happenings. When 'Nareesh'

finally surrenders and shows his helplessness, it was revealed that the lady-thief was indeed his sister-in-law who wanted to make her first meeting dramatic and unforgettable.

Natrang actors who acted in the play included Mehak Chib, Adaksh Bhagal, Aryan Sharma and Manvi Devi. The lights were designed by Neeraj Kant and Music was rendered by Kartik Kumar. The show was coordinated by Mohd. Yaseen.

## Hon'ble Lt Governor Brig (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd) hosts Iftar party for people from different communities of Leh district



### Top News Report

LEH, Mar 23: The Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd) hosted Iftar party for people from different communities of Leh district.

Expressing his happiness at the opportunity to host the Iftar party during the holy month of Ramadan and seeing people from different walks of life assembled for the event, the HLG highlighted the significance of Ramadan

Kareem for Muslims. He spoke about the five pillars of Islam, which are Shahaadah (Profession of Faith), Salaat (Prayer), Zakat (Alms giving), Roza/Sawm (Fasting) and Haj (Pilgrimage). He emphasised the importance of observing Zakat (Alms giving) and helping those in need.

Stating that the holy month of Ramadan teaches the lessons of benevolence and brotherhood, the HLG underscored the significance

of observing fast during this Holy month as one gets first-hand experience of what it feels like when one is denied food and water during the scorching summer months and chilling winter months. Emphasising Sallallahu alaihi wasallam's teaching of brotherhood and compassion along with living life for others and emulating his teachings, the HLG stated that we, as humans, must play the roles assigned to us by the Almighty and

strive hard to serve humanity in the best way possible. One must be great in one's deed-something which the holy month of Ramadan teaches us, asserted the HLG.

First Lady Smt Neelam Mishra; Chief Justice of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Justice Tashi Rabstan; Chairman/CEC, LAHDC Leh Advocate Tashi Gyalson; Executive Councilors, LAHDC Leh- Tashi Namgyal Yakzee and Ghulam Mehdi; Venerable Khamtak Rinpoche; Venerable monks from Ladakh Gonpa Association; Chief Secretary, Dr Pawan Kotwal, IAS; representatives and heads of religious organisations, non-governmental organisations; officials from District Court, Ladakh Police, University of Ladakh; Army and Paramilitary forces; DC Leh, Santosh Sukhadeve, IAS; prominent citizens from Leh districts and award winners were present during the Iftar party.

ENIT NO. 79OF 2024-25 DATED 17-03-2025

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI PHE MECHANICAL DIVISION UDHAMPUR  
SHORT TERM TENDER  
E-NIT JSPHEM/UDHR/ 79OF 2024-25 DATED 17-03-2025

Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mechanical Division, Udhampur, on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir UT, invites tenders by e-tendering mode from registered firms who have sufficient experience in the relevant field of electro-mechanical/ electrical works.

Sl.	Name of the work	Qty	Name of Division	Cost of Tender Document / Tender Fee (in Rs)	Earnest Money (in Rs)	Bid validity
1	Providing, installation, testing and commissioning of 5000 GPH x 21-29 meter head mono submersible pump motor set at WSS Shiv Nagar Udhampur Town.	01 job	Jal Shakti PHE Mech. Division Udhampur	Rs. 200.00 (Non-refundable in shape of treasury challan in favour of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mech. Division Udhampur	(Rs. 2000.00) 2% (in case of non-registered firms) Or (Rs. 1000.00) 1% (in case of firms registered with DIC / SSI / MSME)	90 days

- Bid documents can be seen at and downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 18-03-2025 (11:30 AM)
- The Bids shall be deposited on the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 18-03-2025 (12:00PM) to 24-03-2025 (3:00 PM).
- After opening tender only successful bidder shall be asked for submitting the hard copies of documents with CDR and tender fee
- The complete bidding process will be online <http://jktenders.gov.in>.
- The technical bid will be opened on line on 25-03-2025 at 11.00 A.M or any other subsequent date in the office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mechanical Division Udhampur.
- The Financial bids of the bidders shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Mechanical Division Udhampur after evaluation of technical bids. The date shall be communicated separately.
- Bids must be accompanied by bid security and cost of Tender Document as specified in column 5 & 6 of the table (and for DIC/SSI/MSME registered firms as per Industrial Policy of J&K govt.) payable at Udhampur pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, PHE Mechanical Division, Udhampur.
- Bid security will have to be in form of CDR / FDR / BG of any scheduled bank and shall have to be valid for one year or more after last date of receipt of Bid. The cost of downloaded tender documents shall be in form of Treasury Challan / e-Challan in favour of Executive Engineer PHE Mechanical Division, Udhampur payable at Udhampur.
- Firms who will fulfill the following parameters are eligible to participate.
  - Average Annual financial turnover during the last 3 years, ending 31 March of the previous financial year, should be at least 30% of this estimated cost.
  - Experience of having successfully completed similar works during last 07 years ending last day of month previous to the one in which applications are invited should be either of the following:-
    - Three similar completed works costing not less than the amount equal to 40% of the estimated cost
    - Two similar completed works costing not less than the amount equal to 50% of the estimate cost.
    - One similar completed work costing not less than the amount equal to 80% of the estimated cost.
  - Definition of "similar work" should be clearly defined.
- The bid shall remain open for acceptance for a period of 90 days from the date of opening bids. If any bidder / tenderer withdraws his bid / tender before the said period or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid, the earnest money of the firm shall stand forfeited.
- The tenderers are advised to visit the site of work before uploading their tenders so as to acquaint themselves with exact site conditions.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding documents from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>

NO. JSPHEMUDHR/2024-25/42995-98  
Dated:-17-03-2025

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Udhampur

## EDITORIAL

ECONOMIC  
GROWTH

**E**ase of Doing Business (EoDB) is a critical factor that determines a country's ability to attract investment, foster innovation, and create a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. It refers to the regulatory environment, administrative efficiency, and infrastructural support that facilitate business operations. Countries with higher EoDB rankings enjoy increased foreign direct investment (FDI), job creation, and economic growth. This article explores the concept of EoDB, its key indicators, the benefits it offers, challenges in implementation, and strategies for improvement.

EoDB is a measure of how conducive a country's regulatory environment is for business operations. The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, which was published until 2021, evaluated economies based on ten key parameters that impact business activities.

A business-friendly environment fosters entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic prosperity. Countries that have improved their EoDB rankings experience several advantages,

When businesses find it easy to operate, foreign investors are more likely to enter the market, leading to increased capital inflows, job creation, and economic expansion.

Simplified business registration, reduced red tape, and access to credit encourage entrepreneurs to launch startups, leading to a more dynamic economy.

A favorable business environment stimulates industries such as manufacturing, services, and technology, leading to job opportunities and economic development.

When businesses thrive, tax compliance increases, boosting government revenues without the need for excessive taxation.

Countries with better EoDB rankings attract global corporations and trade partners, enhancing their competitive edge in the international market.

Despite its significance, many countries struggle to improve their business environment due to several challenges.

Excessive regulations and slow government processes can discourage businesses from setting up or expanding their operations.

Bribery, favoritism, and lack of transparency in business procedures create uncertainty and discourage investors.

Delays in contract enforcement, weak dispute resolution mechanisms, and lengthy court proceedings make it difficult for businesses to operate smoothly. Limited access to reliable electricity, transportation, and communication infrastructure can hinder business growth and efficiency.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) often struggle to obtain loans and financial support, restricting their expansion potential.

Governments worldwide are implementing reforms to create a more business-friendly environment. Some key strategies include:

Digitizing the process of company registration, reducing paperwork, and setting up one-stop service centers can help entrepreneurs establish businesses quickly.

Implementing fast-track courts for commercial disputes, ensuring contract enforcement, and increasing judicial transparency can boost investor confidence.

Encouraging banks to provide loans to startups, reducing interest rates, and offering financial incentives to SMEs can foster business growth.

Investing in roads, electricity, water supply, and internet connectivity can facilitate business operations and attract global investors.

Implementing digital governance, online payment systems, and strict anti-corruption laws can help build trust in the business environment.

Reducing tax complexities, offering tax holidays for new businesses, and ensuring timely tax refunds can encourage compliance and economic activity.

Several countries have successfully improved their EoDB rankings by implementing reforms.

Singapore consistently ranks among the top due to its streamlined business registration process, low taxes, and strong legal framework.

New Zealand is one of the easiest places to start a business, with an online registration process that takes only a few hours.

India has improved its ranking significantly by digitizing business registration, implementing GST (Goods and Services Tax), and simplifying insolvency laws.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) has established free trade zones, minimal taxation policies, and modern infrastructure to attract global businesses.

Ease of Doing Business is a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and prosperity. By simplifying regulations, improving infrastructure, enhancing transparency, and fostering entrepreneurship, countries can create an environment where businesses thrive. Governments must continuously implement reforms, leveraging technology and policy changes to ensure that both domestic and foreign enterprises find it easier to invest, expand, and contribute to national development.

A business-friendly nation is not only attractive to investors but also ensures job creation, higher tax revenues, and long-term economic stability, making it an essential goal for policymakers worldwide.

## Microplastics: are they poisoning crops and jeopardising food production?

By: Vijay Garg

**W**hile poorly understood, the threat of microplastics could rival other serious threats, including climate change and biodiversity loss.

Microplastics: are they poisoning crops and jeopardising food production?

While poorly understood, the threat of microplastics could rival other serious threats, including climate change and biodiversity loss

Microplastics are hindering photosynthesis, the process by which plants convert energy from the sun into the fruit and vegetables we eat. This threatens massive losses in crop and seafood production over the coming decades that could mean food shortages for hundreds of millions of people.

So concludes an alarming new study. The authors combined more than 3,000 observations of the effects of microplastics on plants from 157 separate scientific reports, and then extrapolated the results using machine learning, a type of computer model that trains AI to spot patterns in data.

Microplastic exposure, they found, reduces photosynthesis in land plants and marine and freshwater algae by 7% to 12%. The authors calculated that this could eventually reduce yields of staple crops such as rice, wheat and maize by between 4% and 14%.

How realistic is this scenario? While the new study does not fully support such dramatic conclusions, it does draw attention to the possible future risks from

microplastics.

The complexities of microplastics

Plastics are useful and versatile products. But they are also difficult to recycle and during 2025 alone, will probably account for 360 million tonnes of solid waste.

More insidious are the trillions of tiny fragments these plastic products break up into, now found everywhere from the deep sea to your brain. These microplastics are less than 5mm in size and some of them are as small as 1 micron (micro-metre), meaning that 10,000 of them could easily fit inside an average plant or animal cell.

Scientists have estimated that about 11 million tonnes of these microplastics, including 51 trillion individual particles, are released into the ocean each year.

Researchers increasingly use AI models to analyse complex datasets. The results can often be useful. My colleagues and I used similar methods to analyse massive molecular datasets and determine the chemical composition of palm oil in different regions of the tropics.

In that case, it was difficult to analyse one group of compounds across a relatively small geographic region. The risks of misleading conclusions are many times greater when trying to analyse microplastics and their different effects globally, as in this new study.

New study sought to answer questions that are orders of magnitude more complex, involving vast quantities of microplastics in the entirety of the global biosphere. Other scientists have expressed concern about the

limited data used by the current model, that could lead to over-speculation about the possible consequences for food supplies.

Despite these concerns, the new study is useful for highlighting the growing body of scientific data on the deleterious effects of microplastics, found in ecosystems from the Arctic to the Amazon. Over the past 20 years, evidence of the potential risk of microplastics has steadily accumulated.

More research is needed

The main conclusions of the new study are based on extrapolations that may not apply on a global scale. The reality is that there are many thousands of types of microplastics, that differ significantly in their chemical composition, size, environmental distribution and biological effects. The new study did not discriminate between them. This means that it is difficult to study their effects on individual processes within human or plant health.

Larger microplastics accumulate in the soil while much smaller microplastics can be present in the air and can be directly absorbed into plant cells. In some cases, the smaller microplastics can damage the cellular bodies, called chloroplasts, involved in photosynthesis.

Previous studies have shown that exposing some algae to microplastics can reduce photosynthesis and increase stress, leading to cell damage similar to the effects of ageing in people. Other studies on crop plants such as tobacco have concluded that the effects of microplastics on photosynthesis vary with the type and dose, exposure duration

and plant species. In other words, there is no single approach for comparing the effects on plants as different as a lettuce and an apple tree.

Given the potential risk to global food production, more priority should be given to rigorous scientific research of microplastics and their effects on both crops and the marine life that supports fish and seafood stocks.

The World Economic Forum has labelled microplastics as a top ten threat and recommends urgent action. In its latest analysis, it also reported that the average person could ingest between 78,000 and 211,000 of these particles each year. It is estimated that the emission of microplastic particles is likely to more than double in the next 15 years, possibly over 40 million tonnes annually.

Despite growing concern among scientists and civil society, several of the larger public bodies involved in microplastics research in the US and Europe are considering radical cuts to both environmental research funding and regulatory oversight.

While poorly understood, the threat of microplastics could rival other serious threats, including climate change and biodiversity loss.

**(Vijay Garg Retired  
Principal Educational  
Columnist Street kour  
Chand MHR Malout  
Punjab)**

## “Career after marriage: Flight or confusion?”

By: Priyanka Saurabh

**F**amilies need to understand that marriage does not mean the end of women's careers.

Men should play an equal role in the responsibilities of the home and children. Companies should provide more flexible job options for women. Instead of looking at career and marriage as opposing poles, they need to be taken together. Men should also be equal partners in the responsibilities of the home and children. Companies should provide flexible working options so that women can easily play both roles.

Imagine a girl who worked day and night for her career, got degrees, and gathered experience and then... got married! And after marriage? Often the same thing happens, which has been happening for generations—the career either stops or slowly fades into oblivion. In our society, marriage is considered a “milestone” in the life of women. But the question is whether this milestone serves to advance the career road or puts a big brake on it.

Career or marriage: should there really be a choice?

In our society, marriage is considered a “turning point” in women's lives. But the question is whether this turning point is for pushing forward or for pushing back. Many times, the family, society, and even women themselves think that a career is no longer a priority after marriage. Many times women are forced to think that career and marriage cannot go together. Family, society, and sometimes even women themselves believe that career becomes a lesser priority after marriage. Is this correct? Or is it just a social perception that needs to be changed?

“Now you have to take care of the house!”

How many times have we heard that after marriage, women give up their careers and start “taking care of the house”? If they were in a lucrative corporate job before marriage, then after marriage the question arises—“How will you manage both office and home now?” And the solution is often this—“Give up your career!” After marriage, the family and society often expect women to give priority to household responsibilities over career. Why is this thinking? Is the same expected from men as well?

Sacrifice Sale of Dreams: Wedding Special Discount!

Women's dreams and careers go on discount like goods on sale. —“Your passion comes later; family comes first!” “Husband's job is more important; yours was just a time pass!” “If you stay at home, your children will get a better upbringing!”

Mommy Track: Career break or permanent stop?

As soon as motherhood comes, women's careers are put on the “mommy track.” That is, they are put out of the race for promotion in a side role. They are also given less importance in the workplace because it is believed that now they will not be as committed to a “full-time career.” Many women are forced to leave their jobs after motherhood, while men's careers are not affected by it. Is this not a form of gender inequality? Can companies support women by adopting more flexible policies?

Are men asked after marriage, “What will you do with your career now?”

No, right? If the same question is asked of women, it itself tells where the problem lies. There are examples of women balancing marriage and career together. Isn't it possible that marriage brings new cooperation and support for a career? Many couples work together to advance each other's

careers. Doesn't this require a new perspective?

Rural Women's Careers: Challenges and Opportunities

In rural India, the career situation of women becomes even more challenging after marriage. Due to traditional thinking, lack of education, and unavailability of opportunities, many women are not able to remain financially independent after marriage. However, change is now coming through self-help groups (SHG), rural entrepreneurship, and government schemes. For example, women are running small businesses through Sakhi Mandal and self-help groups. Many women started their own businesses with the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana. Due to the Digital India initiative, women are now doing online business. Women are moving ahead in dairy, tailoring, embroidery, gardening, and agriculture-based businesses.

The effect of marriage on women's careers

According to the report, only 20% of women in India remain in the workforce, while their participation at the graduate level is equal to that of men. About 47% of Indian women leave their career after marriage. The earnings of married women decrease by 15-20%. 85% of Indian women believe that they face career obstacles due to marriage and children. Workforce participation of women above 30 years of age in India is only 18%, while this number is 78% for men.

Inspiring Case Studies

Indra Nooyi managed to maintain her career despite being married. In her book “My Life in Full,” she has explained how she balanced her family and career and how companies need to create supportive workplaces for women. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw (founder of Biocon) built her biotech

company despite marriage and society's expectations. According to her, women can successfully pursue their careers even after marriage if they get support from their family. Tennis star Serena Williams returned to the game even after motherhood and won many titles. She broke the myth that the only option after becoming a mother is to quit a career.

So what is the solution?

Families need to understand that marriage does not mean the end of women's careers. Men should play an equal role in the responsibilities of the home and children. Companies should provide more flexible job options for women. Instead of looking at career and marriage as opposing poles, they need to be taken together. Men should also be equal partners in the responsibilities of the home and children. Companies should provide flexible working options so that women can easily play both roles.

Marriage can be a new chapter, not “the end”!

Marriage should not mean “the end” of any woman's career. Rather, it should be a stage from where she can move forward in a balanced way in her personal and professional life. The next time someone asks, “What about career after marriage?”, the answer should be, “What was before will remain the same—only better!”

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## SMVDU Faculty Delivers Keynote at IIT Jammu's Workshop on Entrepreneurship

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Jammu & Kashmir: Dr. Sanjay Mohan, a distinguished faculty member of the School of Mechanical Engineering at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU), delivered an engaging keynote address at IIT Jammu's week-long Advanced E-SDP Programme, titled "Empowering Make in India: Nurturing Entrepreneurship in Indian Manufacturing." Organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises



(MSME), the event aimed to bolster India's manufacturing sector by promoting entrepreneurial talent and technological innovation. In his dual role as acting CEO of the SMVDU Technology Business Incubation

Center, Dr. Mohan brought extensive expertise to the workshop. He spoke passionately about the pivotal role of technology in empowering startups, stressing how access to technical know-how and

mentorship can transform innovative ideas into sustainable enterprises. "The future of manufacturing lies in nurturing tech-savvy entrepreneurs," he remarked, inspiring attendees to embrace cutting-edge solutions.

Dr. Mohan also highlighted the vital contributions of incubation centers, such as the one he leads at SMVDU. Under his guidance, the center fosters a supportive ecosystem, providing budding entrepreneurs with resources, training, and collaboration opportunities to succeed

in a competitive market. His insights struck a chord with participants eager to tap into the potential of the "Make in India" initiative. The workshop drew a diverse audience, including entrepreneurs, industry professionals, and students, all keen to explore how academic institutions like SMVDU are driving progress. Dr. Mohan's involvement underscored Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University's commitment to advancing India's manufacturing landscape through research, innovation, and strategic mentorship.

## J&K Police Organise 'Run for Unity' in Baderwah



### Top News Report

BHADERWAH, Mar 23: The Jammu and Kashmir police today organised a 'run for unity' in Baderwah to honour martyrs and promote unity and patriotism among the community members and to also spread the message that youth should stay away from drugs. Deputy Commissioner Doda Harvinder Singh was chief guest on the occasion whereas ADC Baderwah Sunil Kumar, ASP Baderwah Vinod Sharma, SPDO Shoket Ali, Tehsildar Baderwah Kamal Preet Singh, Advocate Mohd Majid Malik was also present on the occasion. This event not only celebrated the martyrs' dedication and sacrifice but also fostered unity and patriotism within the community. DC Doda extended gratitude to all participants and volunteers, saying their unwavering support

and dedication were instrumental in making this event memorable and impactful. The run began from the new bus stand Kotli and participants embarked on a scenic route that showcased the natural beauty of the area and the event served as a testament to the unwavering commitment of JK Police to instill a sense of unity and patriotism in the community," the spokesperson added. It provided a platform for people to come together and reflect on the sacrifices made by our valiant soldiers, added Advocate Mohd Majid Malik who finishes run for unity on 4th number. "I salute the bravehearts of our Police. Their legacy will live in our hearts. On this day, let us commit ourselves to uphold the values they stood for—courage, unity and service to the nation," he said and also threw light on NDPS Act 1985 and Article 47 of Constitution.

## Bihar Diwas celebration in Jammu will strengthen 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat': Raman Suri

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Executive Member Raman Suri today said that the celebration of Bihar Diwas in Jammu Kashmir at government level as well as BJP party's level will further Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" by fostering unity and cultural exchange at the grassroots level.

For the first time, the BJP Jammu Kashmir unit is organising various events across Jammu Division, celebrating Bihar Diwas as a 'Sneh Milan' (gathering of affection). This initiative aims to highlight the strong bond between the people of Jammu Kashmir and Bihar, proving that India, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, is one and celebrates its unity in the true spirit of nationalism.

Hailing BJP Party Chief J&K Sat Sharma for spearheading this initiative, Raman Suri emphasized that the participation of prominent leaders from Bihar in these days of celebrations will add grandeur to the event. He stated that the BJP is working to build a bridge between Jammu Kashmir and Bihar, recognizing the immense contributions

of Biharis in various sectors in Jammu Kashmir.

Raman Suri also congratulated Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha for taking an initiative in celebrating Bihar Diwas at Raj Bhawan and inviting students, officials and business community from Bihar to join the moment. He also lauded the Union Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his efforts to unite Bharat and hold such events across the length and breadth of Bharat. Today, entire Bharat, he added, is celebrating Bihar Diwas as a national festival.

Raman Suri said, "People from Bihar have played a crucial role in the growth and development of Jammu Kashmir as bureaucrats, technocrats, laborers, artists, engineers and academicians. Their contributions deserve recognition and should continue in the future," Suri said.

He further explained that Bihar Diwas in Jammu will showcase Bihar's rich cultural heritage through various programmes, including cultural performances, traditional art exhibitions, and interactive sessions. This will provide the people of Jammu an opportunity to experience Bihar's culture, strengthen-

ing the cultural harmony between the two regions.

"The abrogation of Article 370 has ensured that all Indians are equal, and Bihar Diwas in Jammu is a testament to this new era of inclusivity. He also assured the Bihar community in Jammu Kashmir that the BJP stands with them, and if any of their family members face issues in Bihar, they will receive full support from the party through its network.

Raman Suri urged all Bihar residents in Jammu Kashmir to participate wholeheartedly in the upcoming celebrations and make it a festival of unity. He added that these events will not only strengthen emotional ties between but also reinforce the ideology of "One Nation, One Identity."

Bihar Diwas celebrations mark the formation of Bihar as a separate state in 1912. It is a day of pride for Biharis and is celebrated with cultural programmes, seminars, and public events showcasing the state's history, achievements, and heritage. By bringing Bihar Diwas to Jammu, the BJP aims to celebrate this rich legacy while strengthening the spirit of national unity and brotherhood.

## J&K National Panthers Party (Bhim) Celebrates Foundation Day with Tributes to Prof. Bhim Singh and Martyrs, Calls for Immediate Statehood Restoration.



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Jammu & Kashmir National Panthers Party (Bhim) proudly celebrated its Foundation Day today, honoring the enduring legacy of its founder, Prof. Bhim Singh, and paying heartfelt homage to the revered martyrs Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru, and Sukhdev. The event, held under the leadership of Party President Vilakshan Singh, brought together members and supporters to reflect on the party's mission and renew its commitment to justice and equality.

The celebration highlighted Prof. Bhim Singh's monumental contributions as a visionary leader who devoted his life to uplifting the people of Jammu & Kashmir. His steadfast dedication to social justice and democratic values continues to guide the party in its pursuit of a fairer, more inclusive society. Alongside this, the gathering paid tribute to Bhagat

Singh, Raj Guru, and Sukhdev, whose selfless sacrifices for India's freedom remain a powerful inspiration. Their legacy of courage and patriotism resonates deeply with the party's core principles.

In his address, Vilakshan Singh urged citizens to embrace the ideals championed by Prof. Bhim Singh and the martyrs, emphasizing the need for unity, equality, and justice in today's society. He sharply criticized the National Conference, accusing it of neglecting the pressing concerns of Jammu & Kashmir's residents. "Daily wagers, unemployed youth, widows, and specially-abled individuals pinned high hopes on the new government," Singh remarked. "Yet, it appears more focused on political survival than addressing the people's struggles."

A key highlight of the event was the party's resolution demanding the immediate restoration of Jammu & Kashmir's state

hood. Singh accused the BJP of stalling the process despite assurances made before the Supreme Court, calling it an arbitrary delay that undermines the region's rights and aspirations.

Looking forward, the J&K National Panthers Party (Bhim) reaffirmed its dedication to advancing social justice, democracy, and peace in the region, drawing strength from Prof. Bhim Singh's vision and the martyrs' indomitable spirit. The event also featured addresses by prominent leaders, including Hakim Singh, Balwan Singh, Sham Gorkha, Kesar Parveen, Farooq Ahmed Dar, Abdul Ahad Najar, Uttam Chand, Tranter Singh, Ravinder Jamwal, Navin Bali, Rajan Jamwal, Sanju Bhagat, Rakesh Kumar, Gulam Rasool and others who echoed the call for progress and accountability.

As the party commemorates its roots, it stands resolute in its mission to build a brighter, more equitable future for Jammu & Kashmir.

## Teachers' Federation Calls for Transparent Transfer Policy in Education Department



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: The Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shakshik Mahasangh has urged the government to implement a transparent transfer policy in the Education Department to ensure fairness and efficiency in teacher placements.

During a meeting held in Ramban, Vippan Sharma, President of the Federation's Ramban district unit, emphasized the urgent need to address various issues affecting the education sector. He demanded the immediate filling of vacancies for both teaching and non-teaching staff in schools across the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir. He also called for the regularization of all cadres within the department at the time of their promotion.

Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shakshik Mahasangh strongly reiterated its demand that teachers should be exempted from extra-academic duties, as previously assured by the Education Department. Members expressed

concern that assigning teachers non-teaching tasks hinders the delivery of quality education and disrupts academic schedules.

The meeting also highlighted the failure of the J&K government to implement its own transparent transfer policy, adversely impacting the academic environment in schools. Speakers argued that the lack of a fair transfer mechanism results in unnecessary delays, hardships for teachers, and academic disruptions for students.

Teachers working in remote and far-flung areas of J&K and Ladakh particularly suffer due to irregular transfers, leading to a shortage of staff in these institutions. The Federation stressed that without a well-structured transfer policy, schools in rural areas continue to face severe staff shortages, ultimately affecting the quality of education.

Another key issue raised in the meeting was the infrastructure crisis in educational institutions. Many schools lack basic facilities, proper classrooms, and essential teaching aids. The Federation

urged the government to take concrete steps toward improving school infrastructure and ensuring that all institutions are well-equipped to provide quality education.

Additionally, the regularization of all teaching and non-teaching staff at the time of their promotion was emphasized as a critical step in ensuring job security and career progression for employees. The Federation stressed that delays in regularization create uncertainty and discourage skilled individuals from joining the education sector.

Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shakshik Mahasangh has urged the Education Department to address these pressing issues without delay. They called for:

Immediate implementation of a transparent transfer policy.

Filling up of vacant teaching and non-teaching posts to ensure smooth functioning of schools.

Exemption of teachers from extra-academic duties to let them focus solely on academics.

Infrastructure improvement in schools, especially in remote areas.

Regularization of all cadres at the time of promotion to provide job security.

The Federation warned that if these demands are not met, it may resort to peaceful protests and representations before higher authorities to ensure justice for teachers and students alike.

## "Congress will not rest until full Statehood is restored": Sawhney

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Former minister J&K and senior Congress leader Yogesh Sawhney held a crucial preparatory meeting for the upcoming district-wise convention under the 'Hamari Riyasat Hamara Haq' campaign in Reasi District. The campaign, launched by Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) President Tariq Hameed Karra, will begin on February 21 to demand the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting, held by Sawhney in two phases—one in Katra and another in Reasi—focused on mobilizing public participation and strengthening the party's stance on statehood. Sawhney emphasized that if the demand is not met, the campaign could escalate into a larger agitational movement.

Speaking at the meeting, Sawhney asserted that Congress is fully committed to the restoration



of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood and will not rest until it is achieved. He criticized the delay in reinstating statehood, calling it a betrayal of the people's trust. "Jammu and Kashmir had a proud history as a full-fledged state, with a unique identity and constitutional safeguards. Stripping it of its statehood was an undemocratic decision, and the people of J&K will not accept this status indefinitely," he said. Sawhney reiterated that Congress is ready to take the fight to every district, ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard.

Sawhney highlighted the growing discontent among the people, stating that the Congress campaign is not just a party initiative but a people's movement. "The government cannot suppress the aspirations of the people forever. The voices demanding statehood are getting louder, and ignoring them will only deepen the resentment among the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he remarked. He urged citizens, particularly the youth, to actively participate in the upcoming conventions and make their stand clear. "If the government continues to ignore

the rightful demand of the people, this campaign will intensify, and we will not hesitate to take it to the streets," he warned.

Sawhney said that the participation of senior Congress leaders, local workers, and supporters is encouraged, and they discussed strategies for ensuring maximum public engagement in the district convention. Sawhney stressed that the February 21 launch marks the beginning of a strong, organized movement that will extend across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir. He urged party workers to gear

up for an aggressive campaign, emphasizing that if statehood is not restored, the movement will transform into a mass agitation. He concluded with a resolution reaffirming Congress's stand and calling upon the government to fulfill its promise of restoring full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

Along with Former Minister Yogesh Sawhney, several prominent leaders present in the meeting at Katra and Reasi were District President Bhopinder Singh, Rajesh Sadhotra, Rakesh Wazir, Madan Dogra, Vice President Vijay Sharma Ji, Ex-President Pritam Singh, Munshi Ram Sallia, Vice President Jagdish Sharma, Sohan Chand, Karan Singh, Mahila President Subha Sharma, Block President Varinder Singh, Angrez Singh, Mohan Singh, Anil Sharma, Rafiq, Ranjeet Singh, Vikram, Karan Thappa, Seva Ram, Anuj Dutta, Abhishek Sadhotra, Nikhil Sharma, and Prikshit.

## Zeenat Aman urges women in the industry to push for pay parity

Veteran actor Zeenat Aman has been vocal about her journey in the Hindi film industry and how far things have changed in the last few decades. She had previously pointed out how the 'gender pay gap' still remained the same. At The Hollywood Reporter India's Women In Entertainment awards ceremony, Zeenat addressed the issue once again and urged women to 'push' for pay parity.

What Zeenat said

Zeenat was presented the Iconic Artist award at the ceremony by actor Sushmita Sen. On stage, she thanked the audience for the standing ovation and expressed gratitude for the recognition. In her speech, she said, "I know women in entertainment are being celebrated. But I think it is important to remember that all women must be celebrated. Not just women in entertainment."



'I remember more than 50 years ago...'

She went on to add, "It is an illustrious gathering. I remember more than 50 years ago, I would be the only woman on set. What is so heartening to see now is that now in every sphere of film-making there are women who have created their own space. In the corporate world this is something that I am really proud of. But I do have something to say. Please, please push for pay parity. From my perspective you have come a long way, baby! So cheers to that, thank you."

On the work front, Zeenat will be seen next in the Netflix series *The Royals*. The show, which will release later this year, also stars Ishan Khatter and Bhumi Pednekar. She also has a role in the film *Bun Tikki*, which is directed by Faraz Arif Ansari. The film also stars Shabana Azmi and Abhay Deol.

## Anubha Arora enters *The Delhi Files: The Bengal Chapter*



Anubha Arora, who last appeared in Amazon's *Power of Paanch*, will now be seen in a new project, *The Delhi Files: The Bengal Chapter*, which is scheduled to hit the screens on August 15.

She shared, "I've always taken up projects as per my instinct and taken into account that my character has a significant impact on the story. That would give me an opportunity to act more and see myself more on the screen, as that gives me true joy."

"Also, some projects, you know from the beginning, are going to be very interesting to work on, like *The Delhi Files: The Bengal Chapter*. It presents some hard-hitting facts in a screenplay that's woven beautifully," she added.

## Akshay Kumar's 'Kesari 2' to release in theatres on April 18

Bollywood star Akshay Kumar announced that his upcoming film, "Kesari 2" will be released in theatres on April 18.

Also starring R Madhavan and Ananya Panday, the movie is a sequel to Kumar's 2019 hit film of the same name.

The 57-year-old star took to social media to share the news about the release date of "Kesari 2", and also said that its teaser will be unveiled on March 24.

"A revolution painted in courage #KesariChapter2 teaser drops this Monday! Brace yourselves! Releasing in cinemas on April 18!" the post read.

The second chapter, directed by debutant filmmaker Karan Singh Tyagi, is produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions, Kumar's Cape Of Good Films, and Anand Tiwari and Amrithpal Singh Bindra.



According to media reports, "Kesari 2" will bring out the poignant story of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

The first part of "Kesari" narrated the tale of the Battle of Saragarhi,

fought between Afghan tribesmen and the 36th Sikhs regiment of the British Indian Army in 1897. It was directed by Anurag Singh and also starred Parineeti Chopra.

## Ektaa Kapoor blames audience for Superboys of Malegaon failing at box office

Filmmaker Ektaa Kapoor recently addressed the ongoing debate about Indian content not matching the standards of internationally acclaimed films and TV series, and says the audience is responsible for the box office failure of films like *Superboys of Malegaon* and *The Buckingham Murders*.

Ektaa took to Instagram and without mincing her words, the filmmaker provided a 'solution' for filmmakers 'crying' about Indian content not being at par with international content. She wrote, "When Indian creators cry that Indian content is not at par with internationally acclaimed TV series and films, I wonder if it is ego, anger or just misplaced accusations."

Ektaa says audience is the real culprit. She further claimed that the real reason



films like *Superboys of Malegaon* and *The Buckingham Murders* failed at the box office was not the industry but the audience itself. She wrote, "Can we blame the real culprits—the 'audience'? Since it's no fun blaming people in such abstract terms (because we can't take them down on social media), let's just say that a major part of India is in its evolutionary stage as far as content is concerned! You could call it adolescence."

Ektaa urges creators to put money into film-making.

She also took a dig at money-driven corporate studios and streaming platforms, including herself, stating, "These money-hungry corporate studios and apps only think of numbers (me included)!!! Movie-making, content creation is not a business—it's an

art! So, I urge creators to put in their own money... Problem solved!!!!"

Is Ektaa Kapoor throwing shade at Anurag Kashyap?

Reddit users quickly speculated that Ektaa's comments were a direct jibe at Anurag Kashyap, who recently slammed Netflix India for what he called its "corrupt" leadership and lack of creative vision. Kashyap had praised the international Netflix series *Adolescence* while criticising the platform's approach to Indian content.

One Reddit user commented, "She is shading Anurag Kashyap for calling Netflix India corrupt—especially since its head, Monika Shergill, is Ektaa's friend." Another wrote, "This must be a jab at Anurag Kashyap—she made sure to bring up 'adolescence' just after he praised the show."

## Mahira Sharma again clarifies relationship status with Mohammed Siraj: 'Stop spreading rumours'



Actor Mahira Sharma has denied rumours of a romantic relationship with cricketer Mohammed Siraj. She went to social media to set the record straight and put an end to speculation.

Mahira sets the record straight

Mahira took to her Instagram Stories to address the speculation, issuing a clear and direct message that the rumours surrounding her and Mohammed are entirely baseless and should be put to rest immediately.

Taking to her Instagram handle, Mahira wrote, "Stop spreading rumours, I'm not dating anyone."

Her social media post comes after she was teased by photographers in Mumbai about her connection with the cricketer. When Mahira made an appearance at an award ceremony, photographers asked her about the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) and her preferred team. The exchange was captured on video and subsequently emerged

on social media.

The cricketer also took to social media to request photographers to refrain from asking questions about him to others. He took to his Instagram story to share, "I request paparazzi's to stop asking questions around me. It is completely untrue and baseless. I hope this ends".

About the romance buzz

For several months, rumours have been swirling about a romantic connection between Mohammed Siraj and Mahira Sharma, who rose to fame after her stint on *Bigg Boss 13*. Agency reported that Mahira and Siraj are "romantically involved." The report claimed that sources close to the two revealed they are dating, although they have been keeping their relationship private. It further stated that they had been getting to know each other over the past few months.

The rumours intensified after Siraj liked one of Mahira's Instagram posts, and the two started following each other on the platform.

In the past, during an interview with *Filmy Gyan*, Mahira was asked about fans commenting that they are heartbroken about the news of her dating Mohammed Siraj. To which, Mahira responded, "Kisi ka kuch nahi hai (There is nothing). I'm not dating anyone."

The host asked her how she deals with such news and reports of link-ups as a public figure. Mahira said, "Fans can connect you with anyone. We can't stop them. When I work, I am linked to them (co-stars) too. They make edits and all. But I don't give much importance to all this. If you like this, do it, but there is nothing like this."

Mahira gained widespread recognition with her participation in *Salman Khan's* reality show, *Bigg Boss 13*. Earlier, Mahira was in a relationship with Paras Chhabra. The two met on *Bigg Boss 13* and fell in love. However, they parted ways in 2023.

## Pooja Hegde admits she was a victim of targeted trolling: 'It was a shock'



Actor Pooja Hegde was shocked to discover that people are being paid to troll her on social media. In a recent interview, Pooja said it is bizarre that PR strategies are often exploited to target and bring down actors, highlighting the sinister underbelly of the entertainment industry.

In an interview with agency, Pooja opened up about negative PR strategy and targeted trolling.

Pooja said, "Many times, and to me, it was a shock. The one thing I'm really bad at is PR. I remember there was a time when I was constantly getting trolled by meme pages, and I was like, why are they constantly talking negatively about me? It looked targeted. People are spending a lot of money on pulling down other people. When I found out about it, my parents and I were very bothered. But I also took it as a compliment because if someone feels the need to pull you down, it means you are above them. I kept reassuring my parents that it was okay. But after a point, it became too much. I found out that people were spending lakhs just to troll me".

Pooja also disclosed that upon instructing her

team to investigate the source of the negativity by contacting popular meme pages, she was appalled to discover that the trolling was, in fact, a monetised endeavour, with individuals being paid to spread malicious content.

She added, "I told my team to connect with the meme pages and ask them what the problem was. And they said, 'This is how much they are paying us. If you'd like to stop it or troll them back, this is the amount.' To me, it was just bizarre. People believe such things but don't know why I'm being trolled or what the reason behind it is. Sometimes, I see a horrendous comment, go to the profile, and find that there's no display picture or any posts. These are just paid bots."

Pooja's upcoming work

Pooja was last seen on the big screens in *Deva* with Shahid Kapoor. The film garnered a lukewarm response from critics, and underperformed at the box office, failing to make a lasting impact on audiences. Next, she will be seen with Varun Dhawan in *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai*. It is being described as a "commercial entertainer".

## PM Modi pays homage to Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru

NEW DELHI, Mar 23 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid homage to revolutionary freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, who were hanged by the British for their role in the Lahore conspiracy case.

The three revolutionaries joined hands to oppose British rule, with Singh throwing a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly in April 1929.

The bomb was not intended to kill anyone but to highlight their protest.



They were hanged on this day in 1931. All three of them were less than 25 years old at the time of their deaths. "Today, our nation remembers the

supreme sacrifice of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. Their fearless pursuit of freedom and justice continues to inspire us all," Modi said in a post on X.

## Preparations for 2027 Kumbh Mela in Nashik slow, but will overcome challenges, says Fadnavis

MUMBAI, Mar 23 (Agencies): Preparations for the 2027 Kumbh Mela in Nashik are progressing at a slower pace than anticipated, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Sunday, describing it as an event of "faith and technology".

Speaking at a programme of CII Young Indians in Nashik, Fadnavis acknowledged the challenges in organising the large-scale event but expressed confidence in overcoming them.

The chief minister noted that while work on infrastructure is currently behind schedule, the situation is improving. "We started prepara-



tions for the Kumbh Mela last year. If we had started the work in 2020, we would have been in a more comfortable position today," he said.

Fadnavis credited the efficiency of the team working on the event that has been following a reverse planning strategy and assured that despite the delays,

progress was being made, drawing from the experience of the successful Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj.

"In 2015, Nashik hosted the Kumbh Mela, and after many years, no fatalities were reported. This time, we are looking at a similar model of success and efforts underway to develop Nashik and Tri-

ambakeswar," he said. Describing the upcoming event in Nashik as a "Kumbh of faith and technology", Fadnavis highlighted that the integration of artificial intelligence, crowd management systems, and augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) tools will offer an immersive experience for attendees.

"The event will be held across 300 acres, significantly smaller than the 7,500 hectares of Prayagraj," he said.

Fadnavis expressed his gratitude to the sadhus and seers for their cooperation in making the event run smoothly despite the challenges. He also discussed the social impact of the Kumbh Mela,

citing Prayagraj's 2025 event, where nearly 50 crore people attended, coming together regardless of caste or financial background, united by their faith.

"People from across the country attended the Kumbh in Prayagraj, and it changed the economy of Uttar Pradesh. The state's GDP figures next year will be surprising," Fadnavis said, expressing hope for a similar surge of faith and participation at Maharashtra's Kumbh Mela.

The chief minister called for people to connect with Maharashtra in the same spirit, supporting the state's preparations and contributing to the event's success in 2027.

## INDIA must appear to be a 'bloc and not un-bloc' itself in public domain: Sibal

NEW DELHI, Mar 23 (Agencies): INDIA should appear to be a "bloc and not un-bloc" itself in the manner that it does in the public domain, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal has said as he battled for a formal structure for the opposition alliance with spokespersons to represent its views.

In an interview with agency, Sibal said INDIA parties need to have a cohesive policy, ideological framework and a programme for the future.

Asked about the recent run-ins among INDIA bloc partners in the state assembly polls and if it was bad optics, the Independent Rajya Sabha MP said, "I think it (INDIA) should appear to be a bloc and not un-bloc itself in the manner that it does in the public domain." "They (INDIA parties) need to have a cohesive policy, a cohesive ideological framework and a cohesive programme for the future," he said.

"I am not talking about

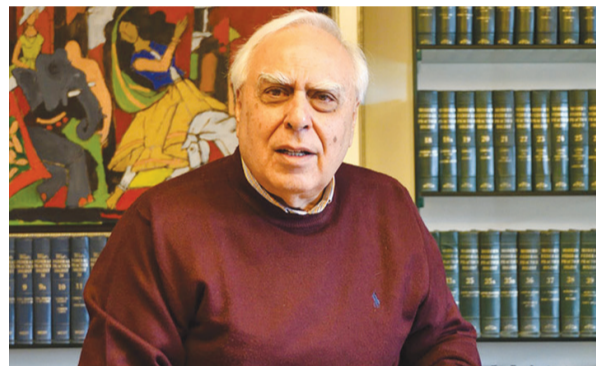
the state level or the national level, there has to be cohesiveness in the way in which it thinks on issues that are of great national importance and unless that mechanism is put in place and unless there are spokespersons of the bloc who represent the views of the INDIA bloc, I don't think that this can move forward very effectively," Sibal told agency.

On whether there should be a formal political structure in place for the bloc, Sibal said he has been battling for it for a long time.

"Obviously, either it is not something that is palatable to somebody or the other, or they feel this is not the appropriate time, but I can't possibly talk on behalf of the bloc," he said.

Sibal, however, exuded confidence about the opposition's future.

"I see a future for the opposition, what form it takes, what structure it takes, we'll see," the former Congress leader added.



The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) of opposition parties came together ahead of the Lok Sabha elections to counter the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance at the Centre.

INDIA bloc constituents, particularly the Congress and the AAP, were involved in sharp exchanges and traded barbs especially in the Delhi Assembly polls. Several political commentators cited lack of cohesiveness in the INDIA bloc for the BJP gaining ground after the Lok Sabha polls and winning the elections in Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi.

Asked about the Waqf

(Amendment) Bill that could be tabled during the ongoing Budget session and the options for the opposition, Sibal said one must see what the NDA coalition partners are willing to do in this matter because the BJP does not have a majority.

"Let us see what their position is. There are elections coming in Bihar. I think that if they introduce the bill, they may be worried what impact that might have in the election process in Bihar," he said.

"So I don't know what the fallout of that is going to be. So let us wait and see. Of course if the bill is passed there are options available to

those who wish to challenge it," Sibal said.

On the contentious delimitation issue, Sibal said it has very serious implications for the polity of the country and that is why Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin called a meeting and a lot of representatives, including those of the Congress participated.

"It has an impact on the future of our polity but in any case the condition is that unless a new census is done the delimitation will not take place. We have not done a new census as in 2021 also it was not done. First the census and then the delimitation. So, 'abhi Dilli door ast'," the senior advocate said.

Sibal, who was a Union minister during the UPA 1 and UPA 2 governments, quit the Congress in May 2022 and was elected to the Rajya Sabha as an Independent member with the Samajwadi Party's support.

## NIA Chargesheets Four Khalistani Terror Operatives In Chandigarh Grenade Attack Case

NEW DELHI, Mar 23 (Agencies): The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has chargesheeted four terror operatives of the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) terrorist organisation in the September 2024 Chandigarh grenade attack case, an official statement said on Sunday.

The accused include Pakistan-based designated terrorist Harwinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda, and US-based Harpreet Singh alias Happy Passi, it said.

In the chargesheet filed before the Special NIA court, Chandigarh, all four accused persons have been charged under multiple sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the Explosive Substances Act, and other related

provisions, for their roles in planning and supporting the attack.

The two terrorists — Rinda and Happy Passi — were the primary handlers and conspirators behind the attack, said the statement issued by the NIA.

They had provided logistical support, terror funds, weapons, and ammunition to India-based on-ground operatives in Chandigarh for executing the grenade attack, it said.

The September 2024 attack was intended to target a retired officer of Punjab Police, who the assailants believed to be the occupant of the house, the statement said.

Investigations revealed that Rinda, along with Happy Passia, had orchestrated the conspiracy to strike terror among

law enforcement officials and the general public through the grenade attack, as part of the broader aim to promote BKI's terrorist agenda, it added.

They had recruited local operatives, namely Rohan Masih and Vishal Masih, who were tasked with carrying out the attack under their direct instructions, the probe agency said.

Rinda and Happy directed the other accused, Rohan Masih and Vishal Masih, to conduct reconnaissance on the target twice before hurling the grenade, investigations revealed, it said.

Investigations in the case are continuing and NIA is trying to track down other members of the BKI terror group and dismantle its network in India.

## Driver 'dozes off', bus overturns, leaving 3 dead, 25 hurt in MP's Jabalpur

JABALPUR, Mar 23 (Agencies): Three persons were killed and more than 25 others injured when a Nagpur-bound private bus overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district early on Sunday, the police said.

The accident took place around 4 am in the Ramanpur Ghati area under Bargi police station limits, an official

said. Three persons were killed and more than 25 others injured in the incident, according to the police.

The bus was on its way from Ayodhya (in Uttar Pradesh) to Nagpur (Maharashtra), a police official said, adding the initial investigation indicated that the accident occurred as the vehicle

driver dozed off.

The deceased have been identified as Mamma (45), a resident of Hyderabad, Shubham Meshram (28) and Amol Khode (42), both residents of Nagpur, the official said.

The injured persons were admitted to hospitals in Lakhnadon town and Jabalpur city, the official said.

## Waqf Bill assault on Constitution, part of BJP's strategy to damage harmony: Congress

NEW DELHI, Mar 23 (Agencies): The Congress on Sunday termed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill an "assault" on the Constitution and alleged the proposed legislation was part of the BJP's "continuing attempts to damage" the centuries-old bonds of social harmony.

It is also part of the BJP's attempts to "demonise minority communities" by spreading propaganda and creating prejudices, the opposition party alleged.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is "deeply flawed".

"The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is part of the BJP's strategy and continuing attempts to damage the centuries-old bonds of social harmony in our uniquely multi-religious society," he said in a statement.

It is part of the BJP's strategy and continuing attempts "to demonise minority communities by spreading false propaganda and creating prejudices", Ramesh



claimed.

He alleged that the Bill is aimed at diluting Constitutional provisions that guarantee equal rights and protection to all citizens, regardless of religion.

It is part of the BJP's strategy and continuing attempts to "defame traditions and institutions of minority communities to keep our society in a state of permanent polarization for electoral gains", the Congress leader alleged.

He claimed the proposed legislation is deeply flawed for five reasons.

Ramesh alleged that all the institutions created by previous laws to administer Waqfs were actively sought to be reduced in stat-

defences are now being introduced in the law to protect those who have encroached on waqf lands," he claimed.

Ramesh said far-reaching powers have been given to the collector and other designated state government officers on matters related to disputes concerning waqf properties as well as their registration.

Officers of the state governments will now have the powers to derecognize any waqf on anyone's complaint or on a mere allegation of the waqf property being a government property till a final decision is taken, he claimed.

"It bears recall that a 428-page report was literally bulldozed through the JPC without it ever having gone through a detailed clause-by-clause discussion. It thus violates all Parliamentary practices," Ramesh said.

"Most fundamentally, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is an assault on the Constitution of India itself," the Congress leader asserted. His remarks came

after the Parliament's joint committee submitted its report on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. Though not listed yet, there is speculation that the proposed legislation could be brought for passage in Parliament during the ongoing Budget Session.

The 31-member panel on the Bill, after multiple sittings and hearings, suggested several amendments to the proposed legislation even as the opposition members disagreed with the report and submitted dissent notes.

The 655-page report was submitted to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on January 30.

The joint committee adopted the report that contained changes suggested by members of the ruling BJP by a 15-11 majority vote. The move prompted the opposition to dub the exercise an attempt to destroy Waqf boards.

The Bill was referred to the joint committee on August 8 last year, following its introduction in the Lok Sabha by Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

## Two die as truck overturns on e-rickshaw in UP's Hathras

HATHRAS, Mar 23 (Agencies): An apple-laden truck overturned onto an e-rickshaw on the Aligarh-Etah road here on Sunday, leaving two persons dead, police said.

The incident occurred around 9:30 am when the truck was en route to Orissa.

The e-rickshaw driver and a passenger were killed instantly while the



truck driver sustained injuries.

The injured truck driver was taken to the Sikandrarao Community Health Centre.

"The deceased have been identified as Gopal (20) and Kanhaiya (21)," Station House Officer of Kotwali police station Arvind Rathi said.

## Heavy Israeli strikes on southern Gaza kill 19, including senior Hamas political leader

*Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, who are allied with Hamas, meanwhile launched another missile at Israel, setting off air raid sirens.*

DEIR AL-BALAH, Mar 23 (Agencies): Israeli strikes across the southern Gaza Strip killed at least 19 Palestinians overnight into Sunday, including a senior Hamas political leader and several women and children, as the military ordered people to evacuate from part of the city of Rafah on the border with Egypt.

The military said it would soon operate against militants in the already heavily destroyed Tel Sultan area of Rafah. Israel launched a major offensive in the southern city last May, when it captured a strategic corridor along the border with Egypt and the Rafah crossing.

The military ordered people to evacuate on foot along a single route to the Mawasi area, a sprawling area of squalid tent camps with few public services. It was not immediately clear if the evacuation order signaled a renewed ground operation.

"Remaining in camps, tents, or houses in Tel al-Sultan or walking on any other route endangers your lives and the lives of your family members," military spokesman Col. Avichay Adraee said in a statement.

Hamas said that Salah Bardawil, a member of its political bureau and of the Palestinian parliament, was killed in a strike in Mawasi that also killed his wife. Bardawil was a well-known member of the group's political wing who gave media interviews over the years.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, who are allied with Hamas, meanwhile launched



another missile at Israel, setting off air raid sirens. The Israeli military said the projectile was intercepted, and there were no reports of casualties or damage.

At least 2 families among those killed in southern Gaza

Two hospitals in southern Gaza said they had received 17 bodies from strikes overnight, including several women and children. The toll did not include the Hamas official and his wife.

The European Hospital said the dead included five children and their parents killed in a strike in Khan Younis. Another family — two girls and their parents — were killed in a separate strike on the southern city. The Kuwaiti Hospital said it received the bodies of a woman and child killed in another strike.

The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said Israeli forces were preventing its ambulances from responding to strikes in Rafah and that

several of its medics had been wounded.

There was no immediate comment from the military.

Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas last week when it launched a surprise wave of airstrikes that killed hundreds of Palestinians across the territory. The Houthis resumed their attacks on Israel, portraying them as an act of solidarity with the Palestinians, despite recent U.S. strikes targeting the Yemeni rebels.

Ceasefire in tatters after Israeli strikes

The ceasefire that took hold in January paused 15 months of heavy fighting ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack into Israel.

Twenty-five Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight others were released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, Israeli forces pulled back to a buffer zone, allowing hundreds of thousands of people to return to what remains of their homes, and there was a surge

in humanitarian aid.

The sides were supposed to begin negotiations in early February on the next phase of the truce, in which Hamas was to release the remaining 59 hostages — 35 of whom are believed to be dead — in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal.

Those talks never began, and Israel backed out of the ceasefire agreement after Hamas refused Israeli and U.S.-backed proposals to release more hostages ahead of any talks on a lasting truce.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 hostages in the Oct. 7 attack. Most of the captives have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals, while Israeli forces rescued eight alive and recovered dozens of bodies.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 49,747 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the dead but does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its records. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The offensive has destroyed vast areas of Gaza and at its height had displaced around 90% of the population. Israel sealed off the territory of 2 million Palestinians from food, fuel, medicine and other supplies earlier this month to pressure Hamas to change the ceasefire agreement.

## 3 killed after Moscow targets Kyiv with a mass drone attack ahead of ceasefire talks

*The attack on the Ukrainian capital came ahead of ceasefire negotiations in Saudi Arabia in which Ukraine and Russia are expected to hold indirect U.S.-mediated talks on Monday*



KYIV, Mar 23 (Agencies): At least three people were killed, including a five-year-old child, after Russia launched a barrage of drones targeting Kyiv overnight on Sunday, according to local Ukrainian officials and emergency services.

The attack on the Ukrainian capital came ahead of ceasefire negotiations in Saudi Arabia in which Ukraine and Russia are expected to hold indirect U.S.-mediated talks on Monday to discuss a pause in long-range attacks targeting energy facilities and civilian infrastructure.

The Ukrainian delegation is expected to meet with U.S. officials in Saudi Arabia a day

ahead of the indirect talks, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. Ukraine is planning to send technical teams to discuss the details of the partial ceasefire.

Russia launched 147 drones across Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian Air Force. Ukrainian air defenses shot down 97 and 25 others didn't reach targets due to Ukrainian countermeasures. The attacks also struck Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Odesa and Donetsk regions.

Extended sounds of explosions were heard in the early hours of the night as the air raid blared for over five hours. Russian drones and debris from shot-down drones, which

were flying at lower altitudes to evade air defenses, fell on residential buildings. Ukraine's Kyiv City Military Administration said three people were killed and 10 others were injured.

Two residential buildings in the district of Dnipro caught fire due to falling drone debris, according to Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko. A fire broke out on the top floors of a 9-storey building, killing one woman, the State Emergency Service said.

In the district of Podil, a fire broke out on the 20th floor of a 25-storey building. In Holosiivskyi, fires broke out in a warehouse and office building, killing one person, according to the State Emergency Service.

Also on Sunday, Russia's Ministry of Defense said it had shot down 59 Ukrainian drones overnight, including 29 over the region of Rostov and 20 more over southwestern Astrakhan. In Rostov, one person was killed and a car caught fire due to the Ukrainian drone attack, according to the area's temporary governor, Yuri Slyusar.

## Straits Exchange Foundation advises caution for Taiwanese travelling to China

TAIPEI, Mar 23 (Agencies): The Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) urged caution for Taiwanese travelling to China, as reported by the Taipei Times.

This comes as three more Taiwanese nationals were detained, and one more went missing in China.

SEF Secretary-General Luo Wenchia emphasized that China is not a safe destination due to its lack of democracy, rule of law, and unclear rights and procedures, which make it difficult to predict or address incidents involving Taiwanese citizens.

According to Luo, a Taiwanese entrepreneur and his son were arrested in Wuhan under unspecified circumstances, while another Taiwanese national disappeared in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province.

The family of the missing individual was later contacted by a Chinese prisoner who claimed the person was being held in jail, Taipei Times reported.

Additionally, Luo noted an incident where a Taiwanese academic who had been hired by a university in Guangdong saw his housing contract suddenly voided by the school.

According to the Taipei Times, Luo

also criticized Beijing for failing to uphold the Cross-Strait Joint Crime-Fighting and Judicial Mutual Assistance Agreement, which mandates that Taiwanese authorities be notified when a Taiwanese citizen is arrested in China. He argued that China's refusal to honour this agreement, along with its lack of transparency and disregard for established procedures, undermines its credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of the Taiwanese people.

Despite these issues, Luo reiterated that Taiwan remains committed to maintaining an open, constructive, and equal dialogue with Beijing, as President William Lai has emphasised since taking office in May last year. SEF called on Chinese authorities to respect the existing agreements to foster better cross-strait relations.

China-Taiwan relations are marked by political tension, with China viewing Taiwan as a part of its territory while Taiwan maintains its sovereignty. Diplomatic ties are limited, and economic exchanges continue despite disagreements. Cross-strait relations are affected by differing political systems, with occasional efforts for dialogue and cooperation.

## MQM leader Altaf Hussain slams Pakistani authorities over arrest of human rights activist Mahrang Baloch

LONDON, Mar 23 (Agencies): Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader Altaf Hussain has strongly condemned the arrest of Mahrang Baloch, a prominent human rights activist and leader of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee during a peaceful protest in Quetta. The arrest of Baloch, along with her associates, has triggered widespread criticism, with many viewing it as an unjustified attempt to suppress peaceful activism.

Hussain, in his statement, expressed his deep concern over the detention of Baloch and her colleagues, emphasizing that their peaceful activism was carried out within the framework of the law. He called the arrest a direct violation



of human rights and an infringement on the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution of Pakistan. According to Hussain, Baloch has been a staunch advocate for the rights of the Baloch people and has tirelessly campaigned for justice, both within the country and on the

international stage.

"Mahrang Baloch has always raised her voice for justice and human rights through legal and peaceful means. Her arrest is unconstitutional, illegal, and inhumane," Hussain said, adding that it was a blatant effort to silence peaceful voices advo-

cating for the rights of marginalized communities.

The MQM leader warned that such actions by the Pakistani authorities would only deepen the divide between the Baloch community and the national establishment.

He expressed concern that the arrest of activists like Baloch would lead to further unrest in the region and exacerbate tensions that already exist.

Hussain called for the immediate release of Mahrang Baloch and her associates and demanded an independent inquiry into the actions of those responsible for their detention. He also urged the government to respect fundamental human rights and to

cease any practices that undermine the rights of peaceful activists.

Human rights organizations, political leaders, and activists across Pakistan have rallied behind Baloch, calling for accountability and an end to the harassment of those who seek justice through non-violent means. The situation remains tense as the call for the release of Mahrang Baloch and her associates grows louder.

The arrest has also drawn international attention, with calls for Pakistan to adhere to international human rights standards and to protect the rights of its citizens, including those who engage in peaceful activism for social and political change.

## Baloch group alleges Pak brutality as fire opened, tear gas lobbed on peaceful protestors

LASBELA, Mar 23 (Agencies): Leading Baloch human rights group Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) shared that a peaceful protest staged in Lasbela saw Pakistani police and security personnel launch a crackdown wherein they opened fire and lobbed tear gas upon peaceful protestors on Sunday.

In a post on X, BYC shared the details of the actions committed by the police and security personnel.

It highlighted that the crackdown took place early in the morning upon the families of missing persons and BYC activists who, despite the atrocities, remained peaceful.



"Crackdown on BYC Lasbela Sit-in: Tear Gas, Firing, and Arrests- In response to the central call of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, the BYC Lasbela Region staged a sit-in at Hub Bawani. Early this morning, police and security personnel launched a crackdown on the protest camp, where families of missing persons and BYC activists were peacefully gathered.

They dismantled the tent, fired tear gas, and opened fire, sabotaging the protest. Despite this aggression, the participants remained peaceful. One protester has been arrested."

The actions by security forces come on the heels of the arrest of BYC organiser Mahrang Baloch who was taken by the Pakistani forces on Saturday while participating in a sit-in pro-

test.

Human rights organizations, political leaders, and activists across Pakistan have rallied behind Baloch, calling for accountability and an end to the harassment of those who seek justice through non-violent means. The situation remains tense as the call for the release of Mahrang Baloch and her associates grows louder.

The arrest has also drawn international attention, with calls for Pakistan to adhere to international human rights standards and to protect the rights of its citizens, including those who engage in peaceful activism for social and political change.

## Emirates Franchise convenes second meeting of 2025 to advance sector development

ABU DHABI, Mar 23 (Agencies): The Emirates Franchise held its second meeting for 2025, chaired by Noor Al Tamimi, Chairperson of Emirates Franchise and Board Member of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with representatives from other emirates in attendance.

The discussion covered the Franchise's operational plan, finalising bylaws, and setting strategic priorities to enhance its impact on the national economy.

Board members, along with the Executive Committee and working groups from each emirate, reviewed progress on the organisation's agenda and highlighted key outcomes from recent discussions.

These included identifying challenges within the sector, proposing solutions, and offering actionable recommendations to align UAE franchising with global standards.

Emphasis was placed on driving innovation, boosting competitiveness, and creating a platform for collaboration among entrepreneurs, franchisees, and stakeholders to promote sustainable growth.

Al Tamimi reaffirmed the Franchise's commitment to empowering the sector as a catalyst for economic diversification and entrepreneurship.

"The UAE spares no effort in providing enablers to achieve its economic vision. Our organisation will play a key role in advancing the franchise sector by implementing ambitious initiatives, including a flexible business framework that supports continued growth and prosperity," she said.

She also highlighted the importance of protecting intellectual property, raising awareness of franchising rights, and expanding the presence of Emirati brands locally and globally.

She also stressed the importance of embracing innovative ideas, fostering a forward-thinking and ambitious business environment, expanding partnerships, and promoting franchising as a tool to strengthen the presence and engagement of entrepreneurs, while providing them with investment opportunities and meeting their needs to help them achieve their goals.

Noor Al Tamimi emphasised that one of the main objectives of the franchise sector in the current period is to enhance its operational structure. The goal is to position the UAE as the ideal business environment for supporting and fostering the international growth of local franchises while also attracting global franchises to the UAE's business landscape, further reinforcing its status as a leading global destination for the franchising sector.









## Asha Kiran Welfare Society Celebrates 16th Foundation Day; Sh. Sham Lal Sharma Lauds Social Initiatives



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Asha Kiran Welfare Society (Regd.) celebrated its 16th Foundation Day with a grand event at Shiv Shakti Temple Hall, Janipur Colony, Jammu. The occasion was graced by Hon'ble MLA Jammu North, Sh. Sham Lal Sharma, as the Chief Guest, while Sh. I.D. Soni, President of Old Age Home, Jammu, Dr. Rajeev Bhagat, Hon'ble MLA Bishnah, and Ex-Corporator Smt. Sunita Gupta attended as Guests of Honour. The event commenced with a lamp-lighting ceremony by the dignitaries and members of the Society, followed by a Saraswati Vandana presented by the Sadikas of Bhartiya Yog Sansthan. Dr. Vikrant Sharma, President of the Society, welcomed the guests and presented them with Shree Phal and Rose Flowers as a mark of respect. He also provided an overview of the Society's objectives, achievements, and ongoing initiatives.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Sh. Sham Lal

Sharma praised the Society for its relentless efforts in uplifting the underprivileged. He remarked that over the past sixteen years, Asha Kiran Welfare Society has become a symbol of hope and service, playing a crucial role in transforming lives through education, skill development, and healthcare. He highlighted that the Society's contributions, including distributing sewing machines to widows, offering scholarships to meritorious students, providing medical assistance, and ensuring food security for the needy, reflect its deep commitment to social welfare. He emphasized that true progress is achieved only when society collectively works towards the betterment of those who need support the most. He urged people to come forward and contribute to such noble causes, stressing that social service should not be seen merely as charity but as a shared responsibility that strengthens the very foundation of the community.

Asha Kiran Welfare Society has been instrumental in improving the lives of thousands

through its diverse initiatives. The Society has donated 24 sewing machines to economically weaker women, including widows, while also training 57 women at its Sewing and Tailoring Centre in Janipur, helping them achieve financial independence. It has awarded cash merit scholarships to 277 students from Classes 4th to 10th to encourage academic excellence. The Society's dispensary has provided free medical aid to over 44,000 patients, and it regularly organizes medical camps to ensure specialized healthcare reaches those in need. More than 106 underprivileged families have received ration kits consisting of essential items like atta, rice, and pulses, and 335 blankets have been distributed to poor and deserving individuals, particularly during the harsh winter months.

Reaffirming his full support for the Society's future initiatives, Sh. Sham Lal Sharma congratulated the members and volunteers for their dedication and service. He assured them that his doors would always be open for such impactful initia-

tives and expressed his hope that the organization would continue to expand its reach and bring positive change in more lives. The event also saw the distribution of sewing machines to two widows, Smt. Veena Verma and Smt. Rajni Mukesh, as a step toward empowering women through skill-based self-reliance. In addition, mementos were presented to donor members who had extended their financial and material support for the construction and development of the Society's infrastructure.

Guests of Honour also extended their appreciation for the Society's efforts. Sh. I.D. Soni lauded its commitment to social upliftment and encouraged attendees to embrace the philosophy of karma, urging them to actively participate in helping the less fortunate. Dr. Rajeev Bhagat, Hon'ble MLA Bishnah, commended the Society's focus on education, especially its scholarship program for students, and assured his full support in furthering its initiatives. Ex-Corporator Smt. Sunita Gupta also praised the Society's efforts in women empowerment, education, and healthcare, emphasizing the need for collective efforts to uplift the weaker sections of society.

The event concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks delivered by Sh. Kamal Natar, General Secretary of the Society, who expressed gratitude to the Chief Guest, Guests of Honour, donors, participants, and all members of the organization for making the event a success. He also extended special appreciation to Sh. Anil Kohli, Publicity Secretary, for his efforts in organizing the program efficiently and appealed to everyone present to continue supporting the Society both physically and financially to ensure its continued growth and impact.

## MLA Arvind asks youth to follow Bhagat Singh's path of courage & nationalism

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Arvind Gupta, senior BJP leader and MLA Jammu West, paid heartfelt tributes to Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh Ji on his Balidan Diwas at Bhagat Singh Chowk here today. The event witnessed the participation of BJP leaders, Karyakartas, and local residents who gathered to honor the supreme sacrifice of the legendary freedom fighter.

Speaking on the occasion, Arvind Gupta hailed Bhagat Singh as an epitome of patriotism, courage, and selfless service to the nation. He emphasized the need for the younger generation to draw inspiration from Bhagat Singh's ideology and commitment to national integrity. "Shaheed Bhagat Singh dedicated his life to the country at a young age. His sacrifices continue to ignite the spirit of nationalism among millions of Indians," he said.

The MLA further reiterated the BJP's

commitment to preserving the legacy of India's great freedom fighters. He urged citizens, particularly the youth, to contribute actively to the progress and development of the nation.

Arvind Gupta reaffirmed his dedication to working tirelessly for the welfare of the people and fostering a spirit of unity and patriotism among all sections of society.

The program concluded with floral tributes at the statue of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, followed by patriotic slogans that resonated through the gathering. Participants pledged to uphold the values of justice, equality, and nationalism, as envisioned by the great revolutionary.

Among those who were present included Mandal President Kushant Prajapati, Ex-Corporators Sanjay Baru and Rajinder Gupta, BJP Karyakartas, including Ayodhya Gupta, Prem Gupta, Hardev Singh, Happy Sharma, Vikrant Gupta, Sonu Manhas, Ajay Anand and prominent people of Ward No. 27.

## Inter-School Level Bocce Ball Championship Concluded, Sun Shine High School

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar23: Open Inter School Bocce Ball Championship-2025 Concluded At Sunshine High School The Championship Witnessed Enthusiastic Participation Around 70 Athletes .The Championship Was Org By Reffa Boules India Federation.Approved By Niti Aayog Govt of India

The Valedictory Function Was Graced By Mr Sharat Chander ( Dsp Pcr Jammu ) As A Chief Guest .Sh R.K Sharma Principal of Sun Shine School Was The Guest of Honour .Other Dignitaries Present On

The Occasion Sunny Nanda ( General Secretary Reffa Boules India Federation),Renu Devi (Director Rbif), Gurvansh Choudhary International Athlete.is also present

Speaking On This Occasion Dsp Sharat Chander Encouraged The Participants To Continue Their Dedication To Sports And Bring Laurels To The Region. Winners Were Felicitated With Trophies And Certificates, And The Event Concluded With A Commitment To Making Bocce Ball More Popular Among Young Athletes. The Medal Winners Are

U-12 Yrs Boys .Urvansh Kumar ( Gold), Samer Katru( Silver) Vikrant Bazilal( Bronze) Under-14yrs Harsh Kumar ( Gold), Anmol Mehra (Silver), Aryan Mehra ( Bronze), Open Solo .Yuvraj ,Gagandeep Singh( Silver) Under-12 Yrs Girls Kavya Kaith ( Gold),Harshita ( Silver),Khushi Sohal(Bronze) Under-14yrs Vaishali Kumari ( Gold),Cuenca Raj( Silver),Jaarvi Lakhotra ( Bronze) Open Girls Bhavan Sharma ( Gold) Indu Bala( Silver) Mansi Bharti (Bronze) all medal winners selected for distt level.

## Youth must uphold the legacy of Bhagat Singh: Kavinder Gupta



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 23: Youth must uphold the legacy of Bhagat Singh and other freedom fighters by working towards the nation's development, fighting against corruption, and ensuring social harmony.

This was stated by senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Kavinder Gupta after paying heartfelt tributes to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev in a function held at the BJP headquarters in Trikuta Nagar on the occasion of Shaheed Diwas.

The event witnessed the presence of several prominent BJP leaders, including BJP J&K Organizational General Secretary Ashok Koul, MLA Bahu Vikram Randhawa, District President Naresh Singh, along with Rekha Mahajan,

Jai Deep Sharma, Ajay Gupta, Lucky Puri, Vijay Sarpanch, Ritika Dhaman, Surjeet Singh, Ajay Partap, Sanjay Bahu, Sahil Mahajan, Indu Puri, Pummy Chowdhary, Pankaj Baral, Sunny Bakshi, and Bharat Gupta.

Speaking on the occasion, Kavinder Gupta said that the sacrifices of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev remain an eternal source of inspiration for every Indian. He emphasized that true tribute to these martyrs lies not just in remembering them on special occasions but by following their ideals in real life. "These young revolutionaries fought against injustice and laid down their lives for the nation. It is our duty, especially the youth's, to take forward their vision by ensuring a corruption-free and progressive India," he


added.

Kavinder further stressed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a 'New India' is deeply rooted in the principles of these great revolutionaries, where the country is strong, self-reliant, and just.

Ashok Koul, General Secretary Org, BJP, J&K urged the younger generation to dedicate themselves to nation-building by actively participating in democratic processes, social service, and constructive initiatives for the country's growth.

Other BJP leaders also paid rich tributes to the martyrs and reiterated their commitment to carrying forward the spirit of patriotism and sacrifice in their political and social endeavors.

The event concluded with slogans of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and a renewed pledge to uphold the ideals of India's revolutionary heroes.



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