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Clarity Begins at Home: Punjab Parties Use Raksha Bandhan For Image Control



put senior leaders, including Partap Singh Bajwa, Charanjit Singh Channi and state Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Waring, on the same platform at a time when factional differences have repeatedly made news. This gives Congress an unusual campaign challenge: before asking Punjab to trust it with power again, it has to show that its own leaders can trust one another. Rahul Gandhi may therefore find that his first task in Punjab is not defeating AAP, BJP or the Akalis. It is making sure Congress does not spend its energy fighting Congress. Aam Adami Party's (AAP) situation is different because it is the party in government. In 2022, it rode a powerful wave of change and won 92 of the 117 seats. In 2027, it will seek votes not as an outsider promising change, but as an incumbent defending its record. Punjab in-charge Manish Sisodia has been holding district-level organisational meetings, while booth in-charge meetings are planned across all 117 constituencies. The stated purpose is to strengthen the organisation and take the Mann government's schemes and achievements directly to households. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann also remains highly visible. The state government is preparing a major state-level function for Rakhar Punnia at Raiya near Baba Bakala on August 28, an occasion that traditionally attracts enormous religious as well as political attention. AAP the refore has to convert governance into political communication. Government schemes may deliver benefits, but elections are also fought on perception.

The Election Commission has not sounded the bugle yet. But the battle for Punjab 2027 has already begun. The only difference is that this battle has not yet reached the voter's doorstep. For the moment, it is being fought inside the political parties themselves. But there is something interesting about this early activity. At this stage, Punjab's political parties are not only trying to convince voters. They are first trying to energise, discipline and, in some cases, reunite their own workers. Senior national leaders are now travelling through Punjab, booth committees are being activated, rallies are returning and organisational meetings are becoming increasingly frequent. The election may still be some distance away, but the campaign before the campaign is already underway. That may well be the first real battle of Punjab 2027. For the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), the message has been particularly clear. BJP national general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh spent two days travelling

across Punjab, holding zonal meetings in Patiala, Bathinda, Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar. The party says it is preparing to contest all 117 Assembly seats on its own. More importantly, the exercise has gone down to the booth level, with the BJP working on a much deeper organisational structure across Punjab. That is politically significant. For decades, the BJP's political presence in Punjab was closely linked with the Shiromani Akali Dal-Badal. Its strength was concentrated mainly in urban constituencies while the Akalis carried much of the rural and panthic burden of the alliance. If the BJP really intends to fight all 117 seats, it will have to build an organisation in areas where it once relied heavily on its partner. So Santhosh's Punjab tour was not simply a visit by a senior national leader. It was a message to the cadre: prepare as if there is no ally to carry you. Yet speculation about a possible BJP-SAD understanding continues despite the public talk of going solo. That

creates the BJP's first internal test: can its cadre genuinely prepare for a solo fight while the possibility of an alliance remains part of Punjab's political conversation? Indian National Congress has almost the opposite problem. It already has an organisation, senior leaders with substantial local bases and a sizeable traditional vote. Its challenge is whether those leaders can work together. Punjab Congress in-charge Bhupesh Baghel has toured districts and met party workers as part of an organisational mobilisation exercise. Now a larger political journey is being planned, with Rahul Gandhi expected to participate in a statewide bus yatra. According to the tentative plan, he would first pay obeisance at Sri Darbar Sahib (the Golden Temple) in Amritsar before joining a journey whose initial stretch would move from Amritsar towards Hussainiwala. On paper, it is an outreach to Punjab. Politically, however, it may first be an outreach within the Congress itself. The proposed yatra would

2 Pilots Dead In Training Aircraft Crash In Kanpur



Kanpur: A twin-engine four-seater training plane crashed in a field near the banks of the Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur on Thursday, killing both the pilot and the co-pilot. According to the police, one of the pilots was a trainee, and the other was an instructor. The two, identified as Sachin Bhatia from Gujarat and Abhishek Pujari from Karnataka, took off at 11:30 am from the Garg Aviation training centre in Kanpur. The incident took place around 11:50 am when they were flying back to the training centre. "We have got information about the instructor. He had an experience of around 3,000 hours. The DGCA has been informed. Their team will conduct a thorough investigation. The police have protected the entire area," Raghuraj Lal, Police Commissioner, Kanpur Nagar, said. Emergency services and authorities immediately rushed to the spot. Visuals

from the incident site showed a completely wrecked plane in a grassy, wooded area. The metal parts of the flight can be seen twisted, with the wing and other white panels broken into pieces. The exact cause of the crash is not yet known. Officials said it occurred after the plane lost control. The training aircraft was brought to the centre in 2023, officials added. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed condolences to the families of the pilots killed in the accident. He also prayed for the peace of the departed souls and for the strength of the families to bear the immense loss.

What the DGCA said
The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), in a statement, said that their team is proceeding to the site for "regulatory oversight and coordination". "The aircraft was on a training flight in the Local Fly-

ing Area of Kanpur Civil Airport. There were two persons on board, a trainee pilot and an instructor. Both sustained fatal injuries in the accident. The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has been informed and will undertake a detailed investigation into the accident in accordance with the applicable rules. The circumstances and cause of the accident will be determined through the investigation," it said.

Didn't Expect Change To Be Violent: Nepal Ex-Minister Pradeep Gyawali On GenZ Movement



Kathmandu: Pradeep Gyawali, former foreign minister of Nepal told NDTV today that the huge change brought about Gen Z protests last year was unexpected. This, he said, was because Nepal is a "post-conflict" society. Speaking at the NDTV World Anviksha Summit in Kathmandu, Gyawali said while gaps between people's expectations and the government's delivery is expected, the form that people's anger took was unprecedented. "It is quite natural that in

every emerging democracy there will be a gap between the delivery capacity of the government and the people's expectation. So there were some grievances... which were quite natural but the government never expected that the language of disappointment will be so destructive and the language of the political change will be the violence," Gyawali told NDTV. "Nepal has shown a very unique example how we can bring the change peacefully. We abolished the

monarchy who run the country over 240 years with peaceful means. We bring the then rebels Maoist and settle that conflict with peaceful negotiation," he said. But for the government change -- "the violent way was not expected and I am very, very concerned that if it becomes a precedent in the future, it will be very, very detrimental," he added. The September 2025 Gen Z protests in Nepal had started as an anti-corruption movement but ended with a change in government.

Towards the end, it degenerated into widespread violence amid police crackdown in which 76 people died. In the elections that followed a new government headed by Balen Shah, one of the leaders of the protests, came to power. Asked how he would rate the Balen Shah government and its policy of maintaining equal distance from India and China, Gyawali said foreign policy of every country should focus on national interest. In case of Nepal, it is laid down in the country's constitution, he said. "We expect that the government of the day will also follow the balanced national interest driven foreign policy," he said. It is an "opportunity for Nepal having a neighbor in south with large population, growth engine and leading in many areas... in the north, second largest economy, leading the innovations," he said. If Nepal, he said, can tap into the potentials of this situation, "it will be best for our national interest".

Gone In Seconds: Nagaland Government Building Collapses Due To Landslide

Kohima: The District Transport Office (DTO) building at Post Office Ward, Nagaland's Tuensang, collapsed this morning due to a landslide triggered by prolonged rainfall. The building had been declared structurally unsafe earlier. On July 23, 2026, Deputy Commissioner and Chairman of DDMA Tuensang, Lithrongla Tongpi Rutsa, issued an emergency demolition order after a structural and technical inspection found severe damage and risk of imminent collapse due to incessant rains. Following the order, the DTO Tuensang was closed with effect from July 24, 2026, until further notice. All motor vehicle-related services, including the issuance of driving licences, vehicle registration, tax collection, permits and other public services, remained suspended. The prolonged monsoon has severely affected Tuensang district. As per NSDMA, 49 families were evacuated since July 19, including 44 households below the DTO and five families from Post Office Ward and Bazar A Ward, due to landslides and land subsidence. Two unsafe buildings were dis-



mantled earlier while demolition of the DTO building was underway. Land subsidence near the DTO area was continuing at an estimated rate of six to eight inches per day. No loss of life has been reported, as the building was

already vacated. The Disaster Response Force under PWD (Housing) was authorised to carry out the emergency demolition. The administration has prohibited entry of public and unauthorised persons

into the area during the operation to ensure public safety. Relief camps have been set up at Tuensang Town Hall, and emergency relief assistance has been provided to affected families.

4th Suspect Linked To Pak-Backed Handler Arrested In Assam

Guwahati: The Assam Police Special Task Force (STF) has arrested another person in connection with its investigation into the alleged Pakistan-based Shahzad Bhatti Network (SBN) in Hailakandi district. Fazal Islam Barbhuiyan, 21, was arrested from the Ramnathpur

Police Station area during a joint operation by the Special Task Force (STF) and Hailakandi Police. Barbhuiyan was wanted in connection with a police case and had been avoiding arrest, officials said. Documents and other materials relevant to the investigation were

also recovered during the operation, they added. This is the fourth arrest in the case. Alleged SBN operatives from Dhubri, Chirang, and Barpeta districts. The latest arrest comes as the STF continues its probe into the alleged network and its activities in Assam.

Top Law College Cancels Convocation Amid Row Over Chief Justice Invite



Bengaluru: National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru, has cancelled its 34th annual convocation for the graduating batch of 2026, citing unavoidable circumstances. The decision comes weeks after

the university had informed students that the convocation would be held on September 12. In a notice issued on August 27, NLSIU said all graduating students would instead be conferred their degrees in absentia, sub-

ject to approval from the university's governing bodies. Students will have the option of receiving their certificates by courier or collecting them from the campus. The university said a form and further instructions would be shared with graduating students. The cancellation comes amid growing opposition from NLSIU students and alumni to the proposed participation of Bar Council of India (BCI) Chairman Manoj Kumar Mishra and Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant at the convocation. More than 700 students and alumni had objected to their at-

tendance and demanded an unconditional apology from the BCI to the student and faculty community of NALSAR University of Law. The development follows a controversy involving the BCI's August 13 decision to temporarily halt the enrolment of NALSAR's 2026 graduating batch over a campaign opposing CJI Surya Kant's proposed presence at its convocation. The BCI later withdrew the decision within hours. NLSIU students and alumni had described the BCI's actions as an attack on free speech and called its directive to identify.

EDITORIAL

Intense controversy over police violence

The police's use of tear gas, lathi-charge and pellet guns against the 'Chalo Parliament' protest organized by the Cockroach Janata Party in Delhi has now become a hot topic of discussion. This controversy is heating up in the Parliament sessions. Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi not only questioned why pellet guns were used on students, but also strongly protested that this was done on the orders of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, which is why Amit Shah did not have the courage to come to the House. In this context, the police action has once again brought the thin line between civil rights and peace and the limits of police officers to the fore. There are criticisms that this is undermining freedom of expression. According to police guidelines, warnings should be given first to disperse a crowd, then water cannons and tear gas should be used. If the crowd still does not come under control, lathi-charge should be used. It should not be such as to cause serious bodily injury. Pellet guns are extremely dangerous. Pellet guns should be used only in situations where people are at risk of death due to the protests. Courts and public organizations have expressed concern that excessive use of force or suppression of protests in the name of security undermines democratic values. There is a view among democrats that protests should not be considered violence just because they cause inconvenience to the people. The Supreme Court has also taken up the hearing of petitions filed against the police action against the protests in Delhi on July 20, as well as the incident of a constable firing an AK-47 assault rifle in the air during the NEET paper leak protests in Siwan, Bihar on July 25. At the same time, the Supreme Court has agreed to hear petitions filed by families of police officers alleging that they were attacked and treated brutally by protesters. It is also argued that the credibility of the case will be damaged by hearing petitions filed by families of police officers accused of brutal repression. However, it is noteworthy that the Chief Justice of India has commented that imposing restrictions on protests in designated places with proper permission is against the fundamental right of protesters. The real purpose of protests is to question and inconvenience the government. To demand that protests be completely orderly and predictable is to impose administrative restrictions on the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Although the responsibility to maintain peace and order lies with the state, it is not justified for the police to use excessive force just because there is a disturbance. At the same time, it should be understood that not every inconvenience is protected by the Constitution. Modern cities are densely populated, so even peaceful protests and blockades can result in the violation of the freedoms and rights of thousands of ordinary people who are not involved in the agitation. However, temporary inconvenience caused to people due to protests is different from violence that violates the rights of others. The courts should recognize a clear distinction between the two.

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A hand-drawn illustration of a hand writing on a notepad, with a newspaper clipping titled 'TRICOLLOUR ESTATE' and a spiral notebook in the foreground.

Mandeep, Abhishek and Lakra emphasise teamwork ahead of FIH Hockey World Cup 2026



New Delhi: As the Indian men's hockey team gears up for the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026, forwards Mandeep Singh, Abhishek and Shilanand Lakra have underlined the importance of chemistry, consistency, teamwork and meticulous preparation as they look to spearhead India's campaign at the marquee event. The FIH Hockey World Cup, to be jointly hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands from August 15 to 30, will see India begin their campaign in Pool D against Wales on August 15 before taking on England and arch-rivals

Pakistan. Veteran striker Mandeep Singh, who is set to feature in his fourth World Cup, said he has now taken on the responsibility of mentoring the younger forwards after learning from senior players earlier in his career. "When I was younger, I used to ask a lot of questions to the senior players. I learnt a great deal from them, and now I try to pass on those experiences to the younger forwards. We talk about handling pressure, staying calm and making the right decisions in big matches," he said. Highlighting the team's

preparation, Mandeep added, "Our sessions as forwards are very specific. We spend a lot of time working inside the last nine yards, focusing on creating the right connections and making sure every attack has an outcome. We've also worked extensively on receiving the final pass and converting our chances." "A good striker is never just focused on scoring goals. Hockey is a team game, and the better your understanding and connection with your teammates, the more effective you'll be. Every time we enter the circle, our aim is to create an outcome, whether that's a goal, a shot on target or winning a penalty corner," he explained. Shilanand Lakra, who is preparing for his maiden FIH World Cup appearance, credited the senior players, especially Mandeep, for helping him adapt to the demands of international hockey. "Whenever I make a mistake, the senior players tell me where I can improve. Mandeep always motivates me and guides me. Those conversations help me keep learning and focus on getting better," said Lakra. The 27-year-old also emphasised that the role of a modern-day forward extends beyond scoring goals. "My focus is always on what I can do best for the team. Whether it's creating opportu-

nities, scoring goals or making tackles, I try to contribute in every way I can. As a forward, it's not just about scoring anymore. We are the first line of defence, and if we defend well, we make life easier for our defenders and midfielders," he said. Abhishek, one of India's most consistent goalscorers in recent years, said sustained success begins with hard work away from the ball. "For a striker, consistency starts without the ball. Off-the-ball movement and pressing are extremely important because the striker is the first line of defence. Once we win possession, the next step is building a connection with the other forwards, and then comes finishing the move, whether that's scoring a goal, getting a shot on target or winning a penalty corner." He also stressed the importance of mental preparation in high-pressure situations. "Composure inside the circle comes from training. Without putting in the hard work during practice, you can't expect to make the right decisions in those situations. We also work on the mental side through meditation and experience. The more you play, the calmer you become when those opportunities come your way," he stated.

Commonwealth Games 2026: Seema Kaliramna wins discus bronze as Tajinderpal Singh Toor finishes fifth

Glasgow: Seema Kaliramna won a bronze medal for India in Women's Discus Throw with a best effort of 58.65m in the Commonwealth Games 2026 at Glasgow. Seema had only two valid throws in six rounds as she repeatedly had the disc entangled in the side netting on the wild night. After starting with a foul, Seema reached 57.32m and then threw to 58.65 before ending her campaign with three foul throws. But the 58.65m was enough to earn her a bronze medal. Another Indian, Nidhi Rani, ended fourth with a distance of 57.10m as Samantha Hall of Jamaica made history by winning the maiden gold medal for her country in discus throw. Julia Tunks of Canada took the silver medal with a throw of 60.67m. Meanwhile, there were setbacks for India in track and field competitions with two-time Asian Games gold medalist Tajinderpal Singh Toor failing to medal in the men's shot put event and finishing fifth on Thursday night. Toor, who won gold medals in the 2018 Jakarta and the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, managed to produce a best throw of 20.27m in the third round and could not better it in the last three rounds and had to be satisfied with a fifth-place finish. The 31-year-old Toor, who has a personal best of 21.77m, opened with a throw of 20.06m. After reaching 19.98m in the second round, Tajinderpal Singh heaved the iron ball to 20.27m. In the



fourth, fifth and sixth rounds, he made throws of 19.93m, 20.26m and 19.79m to eventually end without a medal. Chukwuebuka Enekwechi of Nigeria secured the shot put title with a throw of 21.07m while New Zealand's Tom Walsh got silver and Scott Lincoln of England bagged the bronze. Meanwhile, in the Women's 5000m, India's Asian Games gold medalist Parul Chaudhary finished 13th with a timing of 15 minutes 08.56 seconds. Australia's Rose Davies won the gold medal, finishing the race first

with a timing of 14:44.53, with her compatriot Jessica Hull taking the silver medal in 14:45.01. Megan Keith of Scotland took the bronze medal by finishing third in 14:49.10. All three of the medallists produced season-best efforts to take the three spots on the podium. The 19-year-old Sheriauna Haas of Canada thundered to victory in the Women's 100m T47 race, with compatriot Chloe Dunbar just behind. The pair powered past favourite Anna Grimaldi of New Zealand, who had to settle for bronze.

Union Cabinet approves Rs 36,441 crore sports push with expanded Khelo India Scheme

New Delhi: Calling it the most "ambitious" sports development programme since Independence, the union cabinet on approved an expanded Khelo India Scheme and enhanced the budget for Assistance to the National Sports Federations (ANSFs) with a combined outlay of Rs 36,441 crore covering the next five years. The government has allocated Rs 29,054 crore for the next five years to the Khelo India Scheme that aims to build a pool of talented athletes at the grassroots level as India bids to become a global sporting hub by hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games and bidding for the 2036 Olympics. The assistance to NSFs has been pegged at Rs 7387 crore over the next five years. The existing budgetary allocation for the Assistance to National Sports Federations (NSFs) for the year 2026-27 stood at Rs 425 crore. "The approved outlay is nearly eight times that of the previous Khelo India Scheme, reflecting the Government's commitment to making sports a cornerstone of youth development, nation-building and India's emergence as a global sporting powerhouse," read a statement from the government. To strengthen



the school sports ecosystem, the Government has introduced two new initiatives — Khelo India Feeder Schools (KIFS) and Khelo India Utkrisha Vidyalayas (KIUV) — which will "integrate sports with mainstream education and enable early identification and systematic nurturing of talented children." The Assistance to National Sports Federations (ANSF) Scheme for the period 2026-31 will support Indian athletes and teams through funding for coaching, sports science, modern equip-

ment, international exposure, coaching camps, engagement of foreign experts and participation in major international competitions. "It will also support sports cooperation with countries of the Global South and promote India's indigenous sports internationally," the government stated. "Special emphasis has been placed on expanding opportunities for women athletes, para-athletes, indigenous sports, and sports as a tool for peace, inclusion and community development. "The scheme also provides

support for organising the National Games and hosting major international sporting events in India," the statement read. The scheme also envisages a unified digital sports platform on which athlete databases, infrastructure, competitions, coaching resources, talent assessments, funding and Fit India participation would be integrated. The platform will enable data-driven planning, "transparent governance and personalised athlete development."

Jasprit Bumrah cleared for Sri Lanka Tests after recovering from injury



Bengaluru: India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been cleared to play next month's two-Test series against Sri Lanka by the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru. Bumrah was picked subject to fitness as he had suffered an

impact injury during the recent ODI series against England. He had to sit out of the third ODI at Lord's due to the injury. "Jasprit Bumrah has recovered from his impact injury. He has cleared the fitness Tests mandated by the COE. Hopefully

he will be available for both games as he is integral to the team's plans," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The two-Test series against the islanders will get underway on August 15 in Galle, and the second match will be played in Colombo from August 23. India need to win seven of their remaining nine Tests of this World Test Championship cycle in order to remain in contention for a summit clash berth. Winning the Sri Lanka series by a 2-0 margin is very important before embarking on an away series against New Zealand which is expected to be a tough assignment. Already, India are without the services of Harshit Rana, and Nitish Reddy, who are out with hamstring and quadriceps injuries respectively. Washington Sundar has been ruled out of the first Test with a hamstring injury and Akash Deep is in the middle of a long lay-off following stress reactions on his back.

Commonwealth Games: Preeti Pawar beats Catherine Mwape to enter boxing final



Glasgow: Indian boxer Preeti Pawar (54kg) sailed into the Commonwealth Games final by out-punching Zambia's Catherine Mwape in the last-four stage. The 22-year-old from Bhiwani, who is an Asian Games bronze-medallist, powered to a 5-0 win to set up a clash with Canada's Scarlett Delgado, who defeated England's Lauren Mackie 4-1 in her semifinal bout. The Indian outpaced Mwape for most of the bout, cleverly

drawing her in for effective counter-attacks with her left straight being particularly effective. "I am very happy that I have managed to do what I prepared for. I have to give my best tomorrow for the gold medal. I never take my opponents lightly, and always prepare in detail with my coaches. I am happy that I am able to implement those plans," Preeti told PTI after her win. Mwape struggled to connect throughout and

was beaten almost every time Preeti launched her combination strikes. The Zambian's struggles were evident from the three eight counts she faced in the first two rounds. Such was Preeti's dominance that all five judges marked 10-8 in her favour in the second round. With the bout out of her grasp, Mwape spent the last three minutes evading the pounding from Preeti, who sailed through without having to slog too hard.

Hockey Jammu and Kashmir and Hockey Arunachal register emphatic wins at Junior Nationals



Coimbatore: Hockey Jammu & Kashmir and Hockey Arunachal emerged victorious in Division 'B' matches on the third day of the 16th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2026 at the Coimbatore Hockey Ground. Hockey Jammu & Kashmir registered a commanding 11-0 win over Kerala Hockey in their Division 'B', Pool A encounter. Harmanpreet

Singh (11', 14', 36', 42', 51') starred with five goals, while Gamanpreet Singh (15', 24') added a brace. Kawalpreet Singh (25'), Taranjot Singh (29') and Arjun Pandit (32') also found the back of the net to complete the comprehensive victory. In the Division 'B', Pool B fixture, Hockey Arunachal defeated Chhattisgarh Hockey 5-2. Mohd. Atif (11', 41', 52') led the charge with

a hat-trick, while Salil Kindo (10', 14') struck twice to give Hockey Arunachal an early advantage. For Chhattisgarh Hockey, Mohit Nayak (24') and Vivek Yadav (34') scored their side's goals. Earlier on the second day, Hockey Rajasthan, Telangana Hockey and Le Puducherry Hockey won their matches in Division 'C' while Uttarakhand, Arunachal and

Chandigarh emerged victorious in Division 'B' on Wednesday. The day began with Hockey Rajasthan beating Assam Hockey 11-3 in Pool A of Division 'C'. Mohammad Ubaid Raza (31', 41', 51') scored a hat-trick while Himanshu Kumar Meena (8', 36'), Sandeep (36', 47'), Bisayati Azaj (49', 56'), Naman Patel (6') and captain Manvendra Gurjar (40') added to the tally for Hockey Rajasthan. Suraj Thakur (30', 53') and captain Amanat Ali (3') scored for Assam Hockey. In Pool B, Division 'C', Telangana Hockey defeated Hockey Gujarat 3-1. Ganesh Ravula (13', 55') and Piyush (49') scored goals for the winning team while Divyeshbhai Rudhyabhai Wagh (42') was the lone goalscorer for Hockey Gujarat. In the same pool, Le Puducherry Hockey enjoyed a dominant 7-0 victory over Tripura courtesy of goals from Anubathi (22', 25'), Gowtham (27', 59'), Rithish (10'), Illammaran (14') and captain Mohannath (28'). In the first match of Division 'B', Hockey Maharashtra and Hockey Jammu & Kashmir

Ministry of Civil Aviation inaugurates Hub & Spoke International Flight Operations from Amritsar

Amritsar becomes the second spoke airport under India's International Aviation Hub Strategy



New Delhi (PIB): The Ministry of Civil Aviation today inaugurated Hub & Spoke International Flight Operations from Amritsar, making it the second airport in the country to be integrated into India's pioneering Hub & Spoke framework for international passenger movement. The inauguration marks the next phase of the Government's strategy to transform India into a global aviation hub by providing seamless international connectivity to passengers from across the country through Indian hub airports.

The launch follows the successful commencement of India's first Hub & Spoke operations from Varanasi on 25 June 2026. Over the past one month, the system has

operated smoothly, demonstrating the operational viability of the model and receiving an encouraging response from passengers. During this period, passengers originating from Varanasi have been seamlessly connected through Delhi to eighteen international destinations, validating the effectiveness of the initiative in simplifying international travel.

Through a video message congratulating all the stakeholders present at the Amritsar airport, Union Minister of Civil Aviation Ram Mohan Naidu said, "Hub & Spoke is not merely an aviation model; it is an opportunity model. Delhi will serve as the hub, while Amritsar will emerge as a major international gate-

way for Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. With its strong diaspora connections and vast regional catchment, Amritsar is among the Indian cities that stand to benefit the most from this transformation in global connectivity."

Amritsar occupies a unique position as one of India's major international gateways, serving pilgrims, members of the Indian diaspora, business travellers and tourists from Punjab and neighbouring regions. Its inclusion under the Hub & Spoke framework is expected to substantially improve access to global destinations through Indian hubs while providing passengers with a faster, more convenient and

predictable travel experience. Emphasizing the larger national vision, the Minister added, "Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, India is working towards building its own globally competitive aviation hubs. This is not only about improving passenger convenience; it is about strengthening India's aviation sovereignty and ensuring that Indian hubs connect India to the world."

Beyond improving passenger experience, the initiative is expected to generate wider economic benefits by strengthening tourism, trade, investment and regional development. Studies undertaken by the Ministry indicate that the development of aviation hub operations could generate nearly 0.4 million direct and indirect jobs and contribute an additional USD 30 billion to India's economy by 2030. By 2047, the cumulative impact is projected to support approximately 16 million direct and indirect jobs while contributing nearly USD 1.4 trillion to the national economy. With the commencement of operations from Amritsar, international passengers can now com-

plete check-in, immigration and customs formalities at Amritsar before departure. Their baggage will be checked through to the final international destination, enabling them to transfer seamlessly at the designated hub airport to their onward international flight without undergoing immigration or customs formalities again.

Highlighting the transformational impact of the Hub & Spoke model on international connectivity from Amritsar, the Minister said: "Until now, passengers travelling from Amritsar had direct international connectivity to only seven destinations. With the introduction of the Hub & Spoke model, the global connectivity of Delhi Airport will effectively become available to passengers right from Amritsar itself. Travelers will be able to access more than 20 international destinations with a single check-in and a single baggage tag, making the entire journey far more seamless. At present, nearly 1.5 lakh passengers travel from Amritsar to Delhi every year to board international flights, while another 1.5 lakh passengers arrive from overseas via Delhi to reach Amritsar.

Raksha Mantri unveils landmark policy reforms for ICG personnel & their families



New Delhi (PIB): Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has unveiled two significant policy reforms for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) aimed at promoting gender parity in the induction & service conditions of officers, and streamlining the administrative procedures for granting ex-gratia to the families of personnel reported missing at sea while on duty. Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh, DG ICG Director General Paramesh Sivamani and other senior officials attended the event at Kartavya Bhavan-2, New Delhi on July 28, 2026. Lauding the ICG for its exemplary service over the past five decades, Raksha Mantri expressed confidence that these forward-looking policies will further strengthen the morale and operational efficacy of the force as it marches toward its Swarnim Jayanti (Golden Jubilee) in 2027. He reaffirmed Prime

Minister Shri Narendra Modi-led Government's resolve to strengthen the ICG as a modern, capable and future-ready maritime force.

Gender-neutral induction & career progression

The first policy directive establishes a comprehensive, women-centric approach by ushering in a gender-neutral framework for the induction of officers into the ICG. The highlights of the policy include induction of women candidates into both Short Service Appointments (SSA) and Permanent Appointments (PA) at par with their male counterparts. SSA has also been opened for male candidates. The policy ensures equal opportunities for career progression, commencing right from the ab-initio training phase. The existing PA women officers shall also be considered for promotion to higher positions subject to fulfilment of eligibility conditions. The existing serving women officers on SSA will also be provided an op-

tion to convert their service to a PA, subject to the fulfilment of stipulated conditions. This progressive step reflects the Government's commitment to Nari Shakti and equal opportunity in the nation's maritime security apparatus.

Streamlined ex-gratia procedures for personnel missing at sea

The second policy reform brings relief and administrative ease to the Next of Kin (NoK) of the personnel who unfortunately go missing at sea in the line of duty. The key highlights of the policy include the authority to declare an ICG personnel missing at sea while on duty as 'presumed dead' for the purpose of ex-gratia. The reform significantly eases and accelerates the process for the grant of ex-gratia compensation and terminal benefits to the NoK. This measure ensures that the families of brave personnel are not subjected to prolonged administrative delays during times of mental trauma.

Measures Taken to Prevent and Control Spread of Monsoon-Related Diseases

New Delhi (PIB): The Government has undertaken several measures to prevent and control the spread of monsoon-related diseases in the Country that include: For early diagnosis and complete treatment of malaria, drugs and diagnostics are supplied to the States/UTs through the National Health Mission. For surveillance and free diagnosis of Dengue, a network of 887 Sentinel Surveillance Hospitals (SSHs) and 27 Apex Referral Laboratories (ARLs) identified across the country. GoI provides IgM test kits to all identified laboratories through the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. A network of 5 diagnostic labs has been strengthened under the PPCL programme by providing Grant-in-Aid (GIA) for procurement of Equipment's and consumables. Capacity building and training of trainers, community leaders, and frontline workers to enhance outreach at the grassroots level.

Integrated Vector Management including Indoor Residual Spray in selected high-risk areas, Bed Nets in high malaria endemic areas, use of larvivorous fish, anti-larval measures in urban areas, including bio-larvicides and minor environmental engineering and source reduction for prevention of breeding. STOP Diarrhoea Campaign" is conducted which aims at reducing illness and preventing deaths due to Diarrhoea among children under five years of age. The campaign follows the Protect, Prevent and Treat (PPT) strategy and promotes early management of Diarrhoea through Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) and Zinc supplementation. Disease Management involving early case detection with active, passive and sentinel surveillance followed by complete and effective treatment,

strengthening of referral services, epidemic preparedness and rapid response. Supportive Interventions aiming at Information Education and Communication (IEC) & Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and dissemination of public health messages through various media platforms including social media, radio, newspapers, and electronic media. States are trained to enter the data on Integrated Health Information Portal-Vector Borne Diseases (IHIP-VBD) portal for real-time monitoring.

Provided Technical Guidelines for case management, prevention and control to the States for implementation. Inter-Sectoral Convergence including high-level advocacy with allied Ministries, Human Resource Development through capacity building and policy development. The Government is actively collaborating with State Health Departments and Urban Local Bodies to enhance sanitation, strengthen mosquito control measures, and increase public awareness for the prevention and control of malaria and other vector-borne diseases (VBDs). Inter-departmental coordination, involving Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Public Distribution System (PDS) members, and religious/community leaders to mobilize communities and promote preventive practices. Advisories are regularly issued to States and Union Territories including to continue promotive, preventive, and curative measures, including outbreak containment. The advisory on leptospirosis emphasizes strengthening case-based surveillance through IDSP, timely reporting, and dissemination of clinical management guidelines with early antibiotic use and ensuring lab preparedness with diagnos-



tic kits like IgM ELISA. National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is implementing Programme for Prevention and Control of Leptospirosis (PPCL) with aim to reduce morbidity and mortality by strengthening surveillance and diagnostic capacity, raising awareness on early detection and treatment, improving patient management facilities, capacity building and enhancing inter-sectoral coordination for effective outbreak prevention and control. Management of urban flooding falls under the purview of the State Governments and the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)/ Urban Development Authorities. The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India provides financial and technical support

to the States for strengthening Urban Planning ecosystem. It supplements the efforts of the States through schematic interventions and issuing various documents/advisory guidelines for improving urban drainage and flood management. Time-to-time advisories/guidance are issued to States/UTs by MoHFW, Government of India for actions to be taken for prevention and control of VBDs and other monsoon-prone diseases in flood-affected areas ensuring rapid deployment of response teams, maintain adequate stocks of diagnostic kits, drugs, insecticides and strengthen disease surveillance systems, close monitoring of situation for early detection and containment of outbreaks.

Government imposes stock holding limits on sugar dealers to prevent hoarding, protect consumer interests, maintain price stability and ensure a transparent and efficient sugar supply chain

New Delhi (PIB): The Government of India has decided to impose stock holding limits on sugar dealers across the country with effect from 1st August, 2026. The order will remain in force up to 30th November, 2026. In order to curb hoarding, discourage speculative trading and ensure the continuous availability of sugar at reasonable prices, the Government has decided to impose stock holding limits on sugar dealers. The mea-

sure is aimed at maintaining orderly supplies in the domestic market, safeguarding consumer interests, and ensuring that genuine trade and distribution activities continue without disruption. The Government has observed that the recent increase in ex-mill prices of sugar is not supported by the prevailing demand-supply fundamentals. It has also come to notice that hoarding by certain traders, dealers and market intermediaries, along with

speculative transactions and paper trade without the actual physical movement of sugar from mills, has contributed to creating an artificial perception of scarcity in the market. Such practices have resulted in avoidable price volatility and an increase in both ex-mill and retail sugar prices. The Government assures consumers that adequate quantities of sugar are available in the country to meet domestic consump-

tion requirements. All sugar dealers will be required to declare their sugar stocks and update their stock position on a weekly basis through the Department of Food and Public Distribution's online portal: <https://foodstock.dfpd.gov.in/>. The Department will continue to closely monitor the sugar market and take all necessary measures to ensure the adequate availability of sugar at reasonable prices.

Steps taken to strengthen financial assistance for critical diseases

- **Cashless treatment available for 1,961 procedures under Health Benefit Package-2022**
- **AB PM-JAY expanded to cover 12 crore families; senior citizens and frontline workers also included**
- **One-time aid up to Rs. 15 Lakh via Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi; Health Minister's Discretionary Grant (HMDG) offers up to Rs. 1.25 Lakh for poor patients**
- **Health Benefit Package-2022 enables cashless treatment across 27 specialties, including major non-communicable diseases**
- **Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN) applications processed online through National Health Authority portal; offline submission also available**

New Delhi (PIB): The Government has implemented several measures to strengthen financial assistance for the treatment of critical diseases by expanding the coverage of health schemes and enhancing access to cashless treatment and financial support. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) was launched in September 2018 to provide health coverage of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. Initially, the scheme covered 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable families identified on the basis of deprivation and occupational criteria under the Socio-Economic Caste Census, 2011, in rural and urban areas. In January 2023, the beneficiary base was revised from 10.74 crore to 12 crore families to account for India's decadal population growth. To further strengthen beneficiary identification and expand coverage, alternative beneficiary databases, including the National Food Security Act database and other State-specific beneficiary databases having similar socio-economic criteria were adopted under the scheme.

In March 2024, approximately 37 lakh additional families of Accredited Social Health Activists, Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers were included under the scheme. The scheme was further expanded to cover 6 crore senior citizens of age 70 years and above belonging to 4.5 crore families irrespective of their socio-economic status. Under the National Master of Health Benefit Package (HBP-2022), cashless treatment is available for 1,961 procedures across 27 medical specialties, covering a wide range of secondary and tertiary care services, including treatment for major non-communicable diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic kidney disease, diabetes-related complications, stroke, chronic respiratory diseases, neurological disorders, liver diseases etc.

Government of India provides one-time financial assistance up to Rs. 15 lakh under the Umbrella Scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN) for the treatment of poor patients suffering from life-threatening diseases related to the heart, kidney, liver, and cancer, etc., in Government hospitals/institutes with super-specialty facilities, subject to fulfilment of the eligibility conditions prescribed under the scheme guidelines. Further, under the Health Minister's Discretionary Grant (HMDG), financial assistance up to Rs. 1.25 lakh is provided to poor patients suffering from life-threatening diseases to cover part of the expenditure on hospitalization/treatment in Government hospitals, in cases where free medical facilities are not available, subject to fulfilment of the eligibility conditions prescribed under the scheme guidelines. To apply for assistance under the RAN Scheme, the Nodal Officer of RAN at the concerned Government hospital/institute is to be contacted, who facilitates processing of the case online through the National Health Authority IT portal.