firstindia.co.in firstindia.co.in/epapers/jaipur thefirstindia thefirstindia thefirstindia

FIRST INDIA

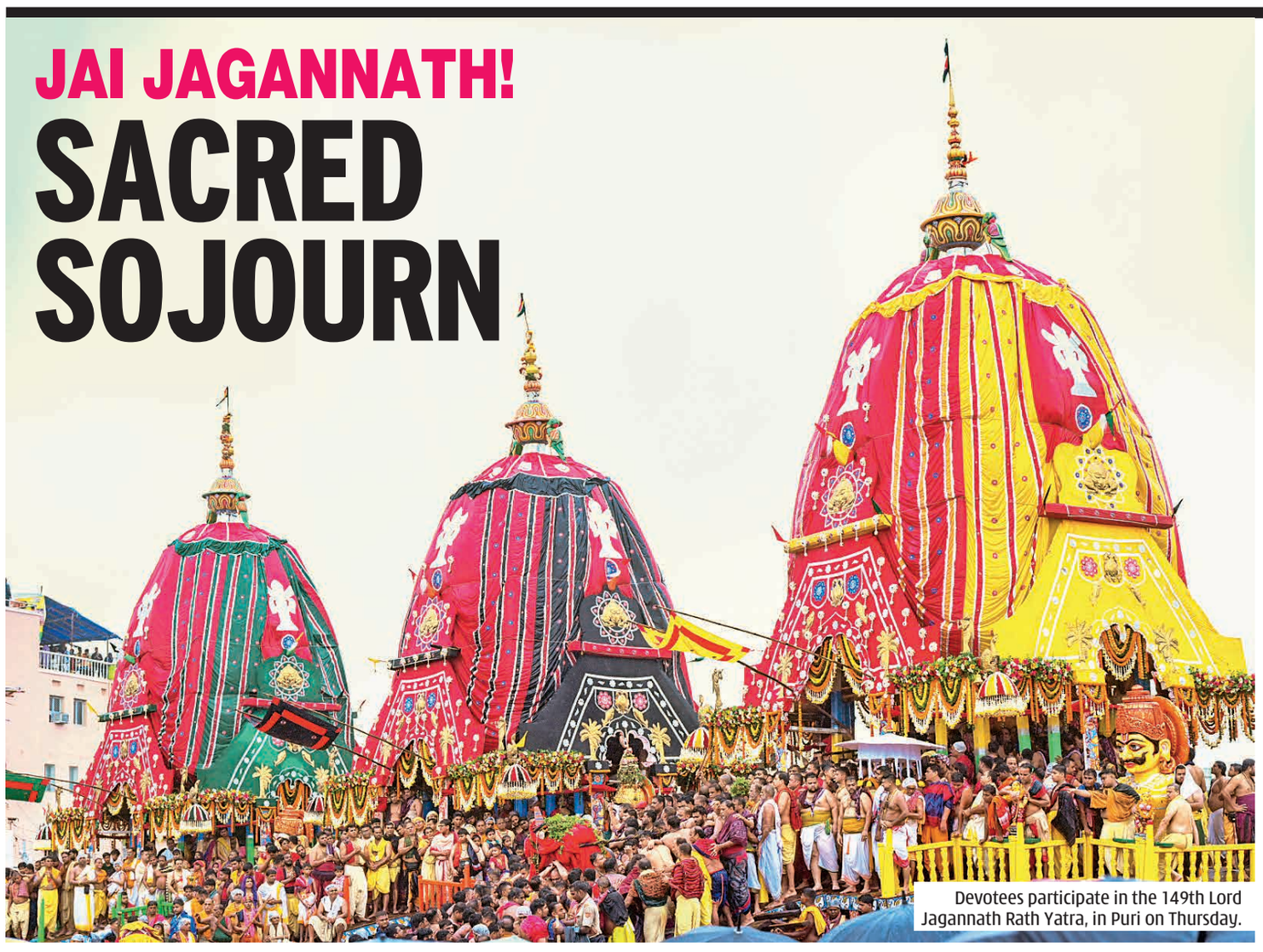
Jaipur, Friday | July 17, 2026

RNI NUMBER: RAJENG/2019/77764 | VOL 8 | ISSUE NO. 41 | PAGES 12 | ₹3.00

SENSEX

BSE	NIFTY
77,186.87	24,072.75
▲ 1.44	▼ 5.75

JAI JAGANNATH! SACRED SOJOURN



Devotees participate in the 149th Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra, in Puri on Thursday.

LORD JAGANNATH

LORD BALABHADRA

Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra began their 9-day Rath Yatra in Puri on Thursday, with nearly 2 lakh devotees gathering despite heavy rain. The festival commenced with the sacred Pahandi ritual, during which the deities were ceremonially carried from the 12th-century Jagannath Temple to their chariots amid the sounds of gongs, conches and cymbals. Chakraraj Sudarshan was placed first on Subhadra's Darpadalan chariot before the grand procession set out towards the Gundicha Temple, about 2.6 km away.

GODDESS SUBHADRA

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah performs Mangala Arti on the occasion of the Shri Jagannath Rath Yatra at the Shri Jagannath Temple, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, on Thursday.

TWO DIE, FIVE FELL ILL IN CROWD SURGE DURING RATH YATRA CELEBRATIONS IN ODISHA'S PURI

Two persons died and five others fell ill in a temporary crowd surge and uncomfortable weather conditions during the Rath Yatra celebrations in this rain-affected Odisha town on Thursday, according to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). During the festival, seven people felt unwell, and they were shifted to the hospital without delay, the CMO said in a statement. "Among them, one male devotee aged above 60 years unfortunately succumbed. The exact cause of death is being ascertained by the concerned authorities," it said. "Separately, in an unrelated incident, a male devotee aged above 35 years suffered a cardiac arrest and, despite immediate medical intervention, unfortunately passed away," the statement read.

IN BRIEF

Pregnant women deaths: NHRC notice to Raj govt

Jaipur: The National Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognizance of deaths of pregnant women in the state. NHRC has sought a response from Rajasthan govt within 2 weeks. A notice has been issued seeking report within 2 weeks. So far, 19 pregnant women are reported to have died in Kota, Bhilwara & Banswara hosps.

India ask its seafarers not to take Hormuz voyages

New Delhi: New Delhi has directed shipowners, ship managers, and recruitment companies not to deploy Indian seafarers on vessels undertaking trips through the Strait of Hormuz amid renewed fighting between the United States and Iran. The move came after two Indian seafarers were killed in attacks on vessels near the strait over last three days.

100 ISRO scientists quit, Centre tightens exit rule

New Delhi: The DoS has tightened rules governing resignations and voluntary retirement of scientists working on India's flagship space programmes, following a surge in exits from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The move comes amid reports that over 100 scientists and engineers have resigned from ISRO in the recent months.

Crane collapses in Mum: 1 dead, vehicles crushed

Mumbai: A major accident was reported at the JP North Society in Mumbai's Mira Road (East) on Thursday after a large construction crane collapsed and crashed into the residential complex, damaging several parked vehicles and triggering a major rescue operation. According to preliminary information, one person died in the incident.

NEET UG 2026 RESULT ANNOUNCED

Punjab's Aryan, Haryana's Panshul top with 715 marks

11.21 lakh qualify, 58% of qualifiers are women

First India Bureau
New Delhi

The NTA has declared the NEET UG 2026 result on Thursday evening. Candidates who appeared for medical entrance examination can now download their scorecards from official website, neet.nta.nic.in.

According to the NTA, nearly 20 lakh candidates appeared for re-exam, which was held on June 21. Out of them, over 11.21 lakh candidates have qualified for admission to undergraduate medical, dental, AYUSH and allied courses. The agency said results have been announced on time to ensure that the counselling and admission process for medical colleges begins as per schedule. Exam was conducted at 5,440 centres across 551 cities in India and 14 cities abroad. More than 58% of the qualified candidates are women. The NTA also said that most of the top-performing candidates are between 17 and 19 years of age.

The highest score of 715 out of 720 was jointly secured by Aryan Gupta from Punjab and Panshul Bansal from Haryana. The top 17 candidates, who scored above 705 marks, belong to Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

ACCORDING TO NTA

- **19 candidates** scored above 700
- **138 candidates** scored above 690
- **1,492** candidates scored 650 and above
- **10,160** candidates scored 600 and above
- **90,780** candidates scored 500 and above

Major organisational changes anytime soon!

First India Bureau
New Delhi

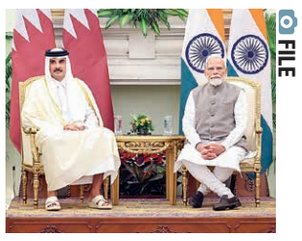
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reportedly completed discussions on the proposed changes with Home Minister Amit Shah, Nitin Nabin, BL Santhosh and some other leaders. Sources suggest that the top leadership may be planning a "masterstroke" with surprising organisational changes likely in coming days. Amid speculation over the reshuffle, a specific date was reportedly mentioned by the top leadership. During a meeting on Wednesday, a light-hearted remark was made: "The 15th has arrived…nothing happened yet?" TURN TO P7

Modi speaks with Qatar Amir, condoles passing of Father Amir of Qatar

First India Bureau
New Delhi

PM Narendra Modi had a telephone conversation today with the Amir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, on Thursday.The PM conveyed his heartfelt condolences on the passing of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir of Qatar.

Recalling the Father Amir's significant contributions as the chief architect of modern Qatar, Prime Minister paid tribute to his visionary leadership, and recalled his pivotal role in strengthening India-Qatar relations over the years as well as his deep affection for India and the Indian community in Qatar. The Amir of Qatar thanked Prime Minister for his call and conveyed his appreciation for the words of support in this difficult hour. The two leaders reaffirmed their resolve to carry forward the Father Amir's legacy and further strengthen the India-Qatar Strategic Partnership and people-to-people ties. They agreed to remain in close touch.



FILE

PM Narendra Modi & Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani.

'TOP' COURT NEWS

NEW LANGUAGE IN 9TH STRESSFUL: SC TO CBSE

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday expressed reservations over introducing a third language at the Class 9 level under the CBSE curriculum and observed that it "places unnecessary stress on students preparing for board examinations."

DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO SAVE WANGCHUK: HC

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed authorities to ensure the health of activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is on the 19th day of an indefinite hunger strike. The court stressed that all necessary medical steps must be taken to protect his life.

Commending Governance!

Dr Jagdeesh Chandra met West Bengal Chief Secretary Manoj Agarwal at his Secretariat office in Kolkata on Thursday afternoon and congratulated him, while extending the same for CM Suvendu Adhikari, on the significant improvement in the state's law and order situation and for announcing new public welfare schemes. Agarwal had earlier served as West Bengal's Chief Electoral Officer, overseeing elections in the sensitive border state which was completely devoid of any ill-fated incident. Apparently in the entire country, he seems to be the most powerful bureaucrat who is successfully working in the 'double engine government' of New Delhi and Kolkata.

CM REVIEWS MONSOON PREPAREDNESS

Remain prepared to deal with situations arising during the monsoon season: CM

First India Bureau
Jaipur

CM Bhajan Lal Sharma on Thursday directed the administration to remain fully prepared to deal with all situations arising during the monsoon season, stressing that public safety must remain the government's highest priority and that citizens should not face inconvenience under any circumstances.

Chairing a review meeting on monsoon preparedness and post-rain road repair works, Sharma instructed officials not to show any laxity in carrying out essential pre-monsoon measures and to prepare a comprehensive action plan for road repairs and other restoration works after the rains. The Chief Minister directed that drains across the state be cleaned completely and ensured that none remain blocked, so that waterlogging, overflow and consequent damage to roads can be prevented. He also instructed officials to ensure the cleaning of drainage outlets on the roofs of government buildings to prevent water accumulation, avoid structural damage and help curb the spread of seasonal diseases.

Sharma said all preparations to prevent seasonal diseases should be completed well in advance. He directed authorities to ensure adequate stocks of medicines in hospitals and make necessary arrangements.

CM Bhajan Lal Sharma chairs review meeting on monsoon preparedness and post-rain road repair works, Thursday.

Govt doctor caught seeking bribe in lieu of foetus removal

Gynaecologist held taking ₹3.5k bribe

First India Bureau
Sri Ganganagar

Anti-Corruption Bureau on Thursday arrested a government gynaecologist in Sri Ganganagar for allegedly accepting a Rs 3,500 bribe from a man for conducting a medical procedure on his pregnant wife, officials said.

The accused, Dr Mahendra Singh, a medical officer and obstetrics and gynaecology specialist posted at the Community Health Centre in Gharsana, was caught red-handed during an ACB trap operation.

According to the complaint, the doctor initially demanded Rs 4,000 to remove a foetus that had died in the womb and allegedly refused treatment unless the money was paid. After verification, the bribe was settled at Rs 3,500.

The ACB arrested him while allegedly accepting the amount and registered a case under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Further investigation is underway after questioning the accused by bureau officials at its Sri Ganganagar unit headquarters, officials added.

Accused, Dr Mahendra Singh (sitting) in ACB custody on Thursday.

FORMER ASI SENTENCED TO 4 YEARS JAIL IN 12-YEAR-OLD BRIBERY CASE BY ACB COURT

A Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau court has sentenced former ASI Kaluram Kahar to four years' rigorous imprisonment in a 12-year-old bribery case. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 15,000. Kahar had allegedly demanded Rs 3,000 and a chicken for taking action and filing a chargesheet in a land dispute. He was caught red-handed by the ACB while accepting Rs 1,000 at Jahazpur police station on July 25, 2014.

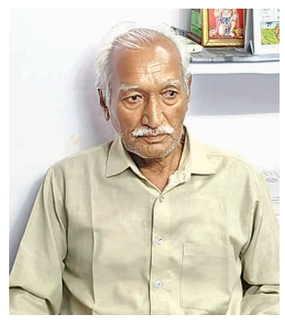
Pali municipality contract worker held taking bribe

First India Bureau
Pali

The Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested a contract worker associated with Sojat Road Municipality in Pali district for allegedly accepting a Rs 25,000 bribe to facilitate the issuance of a lease deed for ancestral land. The accused, Parmanand Sharma, was caught red-handed during a trap laid by the ACB's Pali-II unit.

According to officials, the complainant alleged Sharma demanded the money in the names of municipal officials, including the accountant, JEN and Executive Officer. The ACB verified the complaint before conducting the operation under the supervision of DIG Narayan Togas. Officials recovered the bribe amount from Sharma's trouser pocket.

The ACB is also investigating allegations that Sharma continued performing municipal duties after retirement by getting his son appointed on contract in his place. Further investigation under the Prevention of Corruption Act is underway.


The accused, Parmanand Sharma in ACB custody.

VDO held taking ₹3,500 bribe in Jodhpur district

First India Bureau
Jodhpur

Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested Gram Vikas Adhikari **Ramnaresh Meena** in Jodhpur district while allegedly accepting a Rs 3,500 bribe. Police said Meena, posted at Thadiya Gram Panchayat under Chamu Panchayat Samiti, demanded the money to approve the third instalment under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and photograph a beneficiary's completed house. After verifying the complaint, ACB trapped and arrested him red-handed. Further investigation is underway.

NEWS CORRIDOR

AIRPORT LIFT ISSUE SHAKES PASSENGER CONFIDENCE

Passenger confidence in using the lift at Jaipur Airport has taken a hit after it briefly malfunctioned a few days ago. Although the lift remained out of service only for a short period, the incident appears to have created a sense of apprehension among travellers. As a result, many passengers are now choosing to use the escalator instead of the lift.

GANDHI CAP BECOMES RARE POLITICAL SYMBOL

Former and sitting legislators who gathered at the Rajasthan Assembly sparked nostalgic conversations about the once-common "Gandhi cap." Leaders wearing the Gandhi or Nehru cap have now become a rarity. Centenarian Pandit Ramkishan continues to wear the Gandhi cap, while Parsaram Mordia is also counted among the few who still maintain the tradition. Senior Congress leaders like Mordia are now seldom seen wearing the cap.

POLITICAL FEUD CROSSES INTO PERSONAL TERRITORY

Two influential leaders, who are also brothers-in-law but belong to rival political parties, continue their long-running political feud. Neither misses an opportunity to attack the other whenever controversy surrounds their respective domains. The senior leader routinely counters by reviving issues from his rival's past, keeping the confrontation alive since the previous government. Though political exchanges often turn personal, the two maintain cordial public interactions, greeting each other warmly and acknowledging their family relationship whenever they meet.

TRANSFER DELAY KEEPS OFFICIALS IN PLACE

The prolonged delay in the Transport Dept's transfer lists has produced an unusual outcome for many officials and employees. A large number of personnel who wished to continue at their present postings had made every possible effort to avoid transfers. Normally, they would know their fate only after the transfer lists were issued. However, with the lists still pending, all such officials and employees have effectively become "naturally retained" at their existing postings.

FORMER MINISTER BANKS ON DIVINE BLESSINGS

A former Health Minister has been grappling with prolonged political uncertainty after constituency delimitation distanced him from his traditional support base. He also drifted apart from the senior leader who had mentored him throughout his early political career. Following major political upheavals, the two eventually parted ways. The former minister later aligned himself with a young political leader, but his troubles persisted. Seeking a change in fortunes, he is said to have visited Tonk to seek blessings from a young astrologer.

Two absconding drug smugglers held by ANTF

CRIME ROUNDUP

First India Bureau
Phalodi/Kota

Rajasthan Police's Anti-Narcotics Task Force arrested two absconding drug offenders carrying rewards of Rs 25,000 each in separate operations, officials said. ANTF IG Vikas Kumar said the action was carried out under the guidance of DGP Rajeev Kumar Sharma and ADG Dinesh MN. Under Operation Greenchaff, Hadmanram alias Hanumanram was arrested in Phalodi, while Operation Madguptar led to the arrest of Shobharam in Kota. Both accused carried rewards of Rs 25,000 each.

One of the accused in ANTF custody on Thursday.

TWO HELD FROM FARIDABAD IN MASSIVE ₹60-CRORE ONLINE INVESTMENT FRAUD

Rajasthan Police arrested two directors of Delhi-based Terrapulse Private Limited for allegedly operating an inter-state cyber investment fraud syndicate that duped investors through fake online trading and IPO schemes run via WhatsApp and Telegram. Police identified the accused as Devendra Sharma and Nikhil Luthra. Investigators said the network may have cheated victims of Rs 50-60 crore nationwide. The case originated from a Jaipur doctor's Rs 61.77 lakh complaint. Police traced fraudulent transactions to company accounts and arrested the duo in Faridabad.

PAPER LEAK ACCUSED WITH ₹50,000 REWARD ARRESTED BY SOG

SOG arrested alleged paper leak kingpin Vinod Kumar Rewar in the 2022 School Lecturer Recruitment Examination case, officials said. Vinod, carrying a Rs 50k reward, allegedly purchased solved question papers of four subjects for Rs 50 lakh and later coached a candidate for Agriculture Science exam illegally.

ALWAR BUSINESSMAN's TEEN SON SHOT DEAD; TWO FRIENDS DETAINED

A 16-year-old boy was shot dead in Rajasthan's Alwar with police detaining two of his friends after the body was found near a farmhouse two days after he went missing. Police suspect a personal dispute and said investigation is underway to establish the motive behind the fatal shooting incident soon.

Govt teacher 'strip-searches' students, suspended by dept

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Rajasthan's Education Department has suspended senior teacher Saraswati Meena after allegations that she forced girl students of Classes 9 and 11 to strip during a search for a missing Rs 500 at a government school in Liwali village.

The action followed protests by parents and a preliminary inquiry by the District Education Officer. The teacher was suspended with immediate effect, and a departmental inquiry has been ordered.

Ex-prisons DGP Arun Dugad passes away

First India Bureau
Jaipur

The former Director General of Police (Prisons), and senior retired IPS officer **Arun Dugad** of the 1969 batch died on Wednesday, July 15, 2026, triggering widespread condolences across the police, administrative and public spheres. Son of noted social worker Dr Surajmal Dugad, he was widely respected for his simplicity, integrity, discipline and administrative acumen during a distinguished career in the Rajasthan Police. Serving and retired police officers, civil servants, public representatives and social organisations paid tributes and expressed condolences to his family. According to relatives, his funeral will be held on Friday from his Jawahar Nagar residence to Adarsh Nagar crematorium. A condolence meeting will be organised on Saturday morning at Anuvibha Kendra, Malviya Nagar, Jaipur, to pay homage and pray for the departed soul with family members present.

PHQ tightens norms for inspectors; deputation to JDA, RERA gets tougher

Shivendra Parmar
Jaipur

Rajasthan Police Headquarters has framed a policy governing the deputation of police inspectors to development authorities, urban local bodies and the excise department, making postings to such assignments subject to stricter eligibility criteria. The policy has been introduced amid a large number of recommendations for deputation to departments considered lucrative, including the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA), Urban Improvement Trusts (UITs), municipal corporations, excise department, PCPNDT cell and RERA. Only inspectors meeting the eligibility conditions may apply. Applicants must have completed at least five years of service after direct recruitment and served least two years in their rank. Applications must reach ADG Personnel by July 22, 2026.

₹1.3-CRORE-TOURISM PLAN

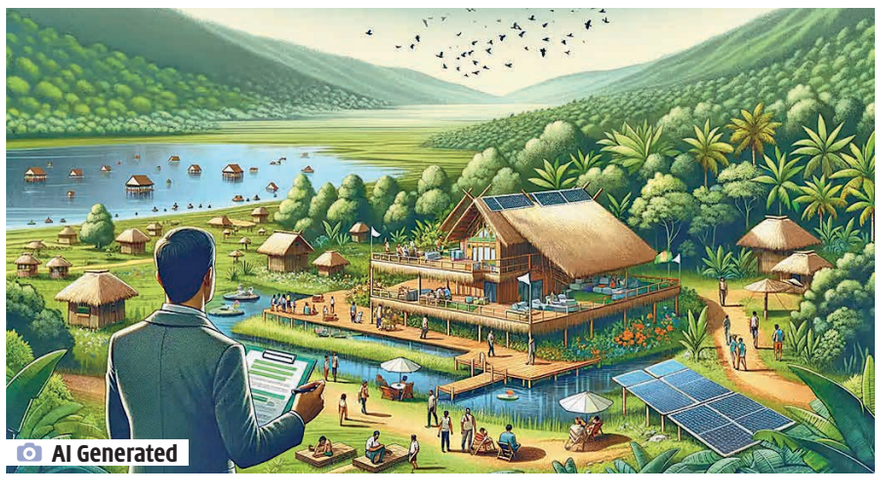
Rankhar set to become eco-tourism hub

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Rajasthan's Rankhar, a conservation reserve in Jalore, is now poised to be developed as a new hub for conservation-based tourism. Two projects—camel cart service for eco-tourism development and establishment of Rann Interpretation Centre—have been developed for Rankhar to connect local communities with tourism, preserve natural heritage and boost tourism.

A camel cart-based eco-tourism model will be developed to integrate the camel culture with tourism in the region. The approximately Rs 30 lakh project is targeted to be completed within a year. A capacity building and mentorship program will be launched for 10 nature guides, who will be educated on the region's biodiversity, natural resources, wildlife and local culture.

The initiative will generate employment for local youths and increase community participation in conservation activities. The Rann Interpretation Centre will showcase the natural and cultural heritage of Rankhar.



The two-year project is estimated to cost approximately Rs 1 crore. It will showcase Rankhar's landscape, environment, biodiversity, local culture and conservation efforts through modern technology. It will serve as an important information hub for tourists, students and researchers.

These projects in Rankhar place the local community at the centre. Camel cart operations, guiding and tourism services will provide economic opportunities for villagers. This will increase local participation in conservation and strengthen the protection of natural resources.

Traders seek GST relief, civic upgrades in Jaipur

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Representatives of nearly 60 trade bodies under the Jaipur Vyapar Mahasangh on Thursday urged the government to protect small businesses, submitting an 11-point memorandum to Jaipur MP Manju Sharma during the Mahasangh's annual general meeting.

Traders sought an increase in the mandatory GST registration threshold from Rs 40 lakh to Rs 75 lakh, exemption from penalties for clerical and technical errors under GST provisions, and regular awareness and training camps on tax compliance.

Traders also demanded effective measures to address parking shortages, traffic congestion and inadequate civic amenities in markets

Other demands included installing clear public signboards, identifying alternative sites for weekly markets and expanding high-definition CCTV coverage across major commercial areas. MP Sharma assured traders that their genuine demands would be taken up with the appropriate authorities, stating that both the Centre and the state govt were committed to promoting tourism and trade.

Maternal death triggers protest at Neem Ka Thana

First India Bureau
Jaipur

The death of a woman after she was referred to another medical facility following childbirth has triggered protests outside the Neem Ka Thana Hospital, with her family alleging medical negligence and demanding action against the doctors. Family members staged a sit-in outside the hospital, accusing doctors of negligence and calling for strict action. Agitated women protesters also briefly shut the hospital's main gate as a mark of protest. The demonstrators demanded a post-mortem, and compensation of Rs 1 crore.

Raj team busts sex test racket in Hry, broker held

First India Bureau
Bikaner

Accused Rakesh Kumar (marked with a red circle) arrested under Op 'Akad Tod', on Thursday.

Rajasthan's PCPNDT team has arrested a repeat offender allegedly involved in an illegal foetus sex determination racket during an undercover operation in Dabwali, Haryana.

The accused, Rakesh Kumar, was caught under the state's ongoing Operation 'Akad Tod' after allegedly demanding Rs 36,500 from a decoy pregnant woman for revealing the sex of the foetus.

Acting on intelligence gathered over the past six months, the team tracked the suspect, who allegedly brought pregnant women from Hanumangarh, Sri Ganganagar and Bikaner to Haryana for illegal tests. He was arrested after allegedly disclosing the foetus's sex at a private hospital. The team also seized sonography records and other documents from the hospital.

Authorities are investigating the role of the hospital and other members of the network. Officials said the racket also misled families by falsely claiming female foetuses and encouraging abortions.

ACCUSED WAS EARLIER ARRESTED IN 2019, REVIVED ILLEGAL NETWORK AFTER A GAP

Investigators said Rakesh Kumar is a habitual offender who was first arrested by the Rajasthan PCPNDT team in 2019 while allegedly operating an ultrasound centre in Sangaria. The centre was shut down following the action, and he reportedly remained inactive for some time. However, officials said he resumed illegal activities over the past two to three years, allegedly using a network of middlemen to lure pregnant women from Rajasthan to Haryana. Based on intelligence inputs over the past six months, the team launched the undercover operation that led to his arrest.

Weak monsoon continues in Raj; rain activity likely from July 21

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Weak monsoon conditions continued across Rajasthan on Thursday, with similar weather expected for the next three to four days, according to the meteorological department.

Officials said rainfall activity is likely to increase in eastern districts from July 21, with isolated thunderstorms and showers expected in parts of Kota, Bharatpur and Jaipur divisions.

Rainfall is also likely to intensify in western and central Rajasthan from July 22-23, while Jodhpur and Bikaner divisions may witness better monsoon activity in the last week of July. Sri Ganganagar recorded 17 mm rainfall in 24 hours. Churu remained the hottest place at 40.6°C, followed by Bikaner at 40.4°C.

Submit panchayat, local body poll schedule by July 20: HC

First India Bureau
Jaipur

The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday directed the State Government and the State Election Commission (SEC) to submit a detailed schedule for panchayat and urban local body elections by July 20, reiterating that the election process must be completed by July 31 in compliance with its earlier order.

Hearing an application filed by the State Government, a division bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Sanjeev Prakash Sharma sought firm timelines for every stage of the election process. The bench observed that excuses would not be accepted and asked the authorities to clearly specify the proposed polling dates.

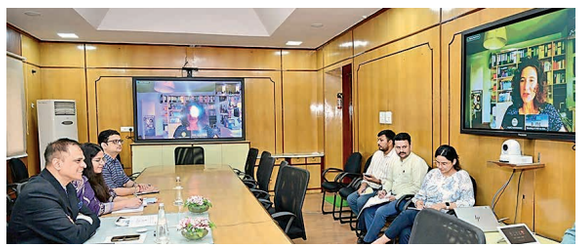
Appearing for the SEC, counsel Amit Kudi informed the court that the commission was yet to receive the OBC Commission's report and data related to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He said the election process could begin within seven days of receiving the required information.

The bench observed that excuses would not be accepted and asked the authorities to clearly specify the proposed polling dates

The court directed the OBC Commission to indicate when it would submit its report and asked the state government to specify the date for the reservation lottery. It also instructed both the government and the SEC to inform the court on July 20 about the complete election schedule.

State Election Commissioner Rajeshwar Singh and OBC Commission legal adviser Ashok Jain joined the hearing through video conferencing. The matter will be heard next on July 20.

CS Srinivas highlights deregulation reforms to German professor


Chief Secretary V Srinivas virtually interacts with German professor Sabine Kuhlmann in Jaipur, on Thursday.

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Chief Secretary V Srinivas on Thursday highlighted Rajasthan's deregulation initiatives, compliance reduction measures and administrative reforms during a video conference with Sabine Kuhlmann, Professor at the University of Potsdam, Germany.

Srinivas explained the role of the Raj Nivesh Portal in providing investors with approvals and services through a single online platform, making the investment process faster and transparent. He said the state's Deregulation Cell is reviewing laws, licences and permissions to promote Ease of Doing Business.

The meeting reviewed the progress of 23 priority reforms related to land, labour, utilities and approvals. Rajasthan received 30,017 applications between April and June 2026, with 17,201 approvals issued.

Demolition drive begins near Indo-Pak border in Jaisalmer

First India Bureau
Jaisalmer

A religious structure is being demolished by the authorities under Operation 'Border Clean' in Jaisalmer, on Thursday.

Heavy police deployment was witnessed in Nachana area of Jaisalmer as the district administration carried out a demolition drive under 'Operation Border Clean' near the Indo-Pak international border. The action was taken at the Mirpura religious site under Dhakalwala Gram Panchayat, located around 15 km from the border.

Rajasthan Armed Constabulary (RAC) personnel were deployed while bulldozers removed alleged illegal constructions at the site. The joint operation was conducted by the district administration and police, with the area cordoned off to maintain law and order.

Officials remained present throughout the drive to prevent any untoward incident. The administration is identifying unauthorised constructions in border areas and taking further action as part of the ongoing campaign.

IT DEPARTMENT PROBES JAISALMER LAND DEALS

Jaisalmer: The Income Tax Department has intensified scrutiny of land transactions in Jaisalmer after examining 700-800 registration records from 2024-25 during a raid at the Sub-Registrar's Office. The department has seized 50 suspicious files and is probing possible black money, illegal funding and cash transactions. Officials from multiple districts are assisting the Intelligence and Criminal Investigation Wing in the ongoing inquiry.

Seven luxury buses seized for flouting safety norms in Jaipur

First India Bureau
Jaipur

A statewide enforcement drive against luxury buses violating safety and transport norms began with a surprise inspection on Tonk Road in Jaipur. During the action at Taron Ki Koont, Sanganer, officials inspected 11 sleeper and luxury buses and seized seven vehicles.

Authorities imposed penalties totalling Rs 8.30 lakh for violations including blocked emergency exits, illegal modifications, unauthorised goods transport and unsafe tyres.

Officials said strict action, including suspension of permits and fitness certificates, would be initiated against violators. Passengers of seized buses were provided alternative travel arrangements.

Gehlot alleges BJP trying to disrupt Rahul Gandhi's 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' drive

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Former CM Ashok Gehlot

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday accused the BJP of attempting to disrupt Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme, alleging that the ruling party feared the growing support the campaign was receiving from students.

In a post on X, Gehlot claimed that the BJP had earlier pressured educational institutions to obstruct Rahul Gandhi's interaction with students in Kota and was now making similar efforts in Uttarakhand. He said that despite a change in venue in Dehradun, students and youth were registering in large numbers for the programme. Referring to the Kota event, Gehlot described it as a major success.

He alleged that students across the country were angry over issues such as paper leaks, examination irregularities and unemployment, and accused the BJP government of ignoring their concerns. 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' is the Congress's 40-day nationwide campaign demanding reforms in the examination system and addressing student-related issues.

RPSC declares PTI Exam 2023 final results

First India Bureau
Jaipur

The Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC) on Thursday declared the final results of the Physical Training Instructor (PTI) Competitive Examination-2023. The commission announced the results after completing interviews of provisionally shortlisted candidates between April 20 and July 10.

The written examination for the recruitment was conducted on January 30, 2025. Following the interview process and in accordance with the relevant service rules, candidates were declared successful in the main selection list.

State Govt revises construction approval process to cut delays

First India Bureau
Jaipur

The Rajasthan Government has revised the approval process for construction works to simplify procedures and ensure faster execution of projects. The Finance Department has issued fresh guidelines, effective from July 18, 2025, replacing the earlier system to address implementation-related issues.

Under the revised process, projects receiving simultaneous administrative and financial approval from the Finance Department will continue under the existing procedure. In cases where only in-principle approval is granted, departments will first obtain administrative sanction, prepare estimates, secure technical approval and complete tendering before seeking financial concurrence.

Work orders will be issued only after approval from the Finance Department. The government will also develop a mechanism under IFMS 3.0 to digitally integrate administrative, technical and financial approvals. Officials said the move will improve transparency, and reduce delays.

HERITAGE REVIVAL

Ghat Ki Guni set for major tourism makeover

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Conservation of Aravalli Hills to remain a top priority through environmentally sustainable development. FILE

A comprehensive plan has been launched to develop Ghat Ki Guni, the historic gateway to Jaipur, into a major heritage tourism corridor aimed at boosting the city's cultural, religious and eco-tourism appeal.

Under the project, Galta Tirtha, the Sun Temple and the area's historic gardens will be developed as key attractions. The initiative also focusses on promoting night tourism to enhance Jaipur's cultural and economic profile while offering visitors an enriched heritage experience.

The Amagarh Leopard Reserve will be integrated into a combined heritage and religious tourism circuit, creating a seamless link between natural and cultural attractions. Authorities said conservation of the Aravalli hills will remain a priority, with all development planned in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Officials said the corridor is envisioned as a balanced model integrating faith, history, nature and culture, with Galta Tirtha and the Sun Temple serving as its principal religious landmarks

The project also seeks to ensure active participation of local communities. Residents and property owners will have opportunities to contribute through heritage homestays, handicraft markets and other tourism-related activities, creating new employment and livelihood opportunities.

Officials said public participation would play a vital role in preserving the area's heritage while promoting sustainable tourism.

OBC Congress calls for 27% quota, political reservation

First India Bureau
Jaipur

RPCC Chief GS Dotasra, OBC Congress Nat'l Chief Anil Jaihind, OBC state chief Harsahai Yadav, and ex-PCC chief Dr Chandrabhan Singh present during the OBC Congress Advisory Council meeting at Rajasthan International Centre, Jaipur, on Thursday.

The first meeting of the OBC Congress Advisory Council was held at the Rajasthan International Centre under the chairmanship of All India OBC Congress National President Anil Jaihind. Rajasthan Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra attended the meeting as chief guest.

The council discussed issues related to social, economic, educational and political participation of the OBC community. It passed resolutions demanding an increase in OBC reservation from 21% to 27% and constitutional provisions for political reservation for OBCs in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. The council also sought a separate share for OBC women within the proposed 33% women's reservation.

A HOLISTIC OVERVIEW OF THE INDIA–UK CETA

READING A LANDMARK TRADE PACT THROUGH A WIN-WIN LENS

Sabyasachi Dutta

The writer is Country Director – India and Member of the Managing Committee (2025-26) of ASSOCHAM

PM Narendra Modi shakes hands with his British counterpart Keir Starmer after Britain's Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Jonathan Reynolds and Union Minister Piyush Goyal signed a free trade agreement. FILE

Fourteen negotiating rounds. Three years. One London signing ceremony on 24th July 2025, and now, on 15th July 2026, the India–United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, finally comes into force. Numbers alone rarely tell a story worth reading, but these are worth sitting with for a moment: bilateral trade already stands around $56 billion, and both governments are now working toward doubling that figure by 2030. Behind the smooth diplomacy lies something more interesting than a tariff schedule. It is a sincere attempt to rewire how two very different economies do business with each other.

India has signed comprehensive deals before, but never with a G7 economy of this size and complexity. For the UK, this is its most ambitious trade agreement since leaving the European Union, aka BREXIT. What distinguishes CETA from the usual run of trade announcements is its structure: thirty chapters spanning goods, services, investment, mobility, digital trade, intellectual property and government procurement, built with enough reciprocity that each side at the end of the day are happy and satisfied. Whether this reciprocity survives contact with ten years of implementation is, of course, the open question. For now, the architecture itself deserves a closer look.

THE SHAPE OF THE DEAL, IN NUMBERS

Start with what changes on day one, because that is where the deal is least ambiguous.

- Ninety-nine per cent of India's tariff lines into the UK become duty-free immediately.
- Tariffs disappear on processed foods (up to 70%), marine products (21.5%), engineering goods and auto components (18%), leather and footwear (16%), textiles and clothing (12%), and chemicals and pharmaceuticals (8%).
- The UK government's own estimate puts annual tariff savings for its exporters at roughly £400 million at entry into force, rising to £900 million within a decade.
- Both governments have set an informal target of doubling two-way trade by 2030 from the current level.

None of these figures guarantee outcomes on their own — tariff elimination only matters if exporters actually use it, and rules-of-origin compliance is where many smaller firms historically lose the benefit before they ever claim it. Still, the scale of what has been removed is unusual and worth understanding sector by sector.

WHAT INDIA GAINS — AND GAINS IMMEDIATELY

The most striking feature of CETA, from an Indian vantage point, is how front-loaded the benefit is. Many trade deals ask the weaker negotiating partner to wait years for the real payoff. Here is a quick look at some of India's most labour-intensive export sectors that would get duty-free UK access from the very first day.

- Textiles and apparel: India is the fourth largest textile supplier to the UK. Zero duty market access from the earlier 12% comes as a genuine competitiveness lever, closing a gap that had long favoured other neighbouring countries under their own preferential arrangements. The sector is poised for immense growth, considering that out of the UK's total textile import of $ 26.95 billion, India exports merely $ 1.79 billion.
- Leather and footwear: duties as steep as 16% fall away, which should bring immediate joy to manufacturers looking to scale up their British order books.
- Marine products and processed foods: with tariffs as high as 70% on processed foods and 21.5% on seafood gone, our marine products exporters can now compete on a noticeably even footing against their competing rivals.
- Gems, jewellery, plastics, chemicals and pharmaceuticals: with zero duty market access, sectors held back by varied tariff peaks can now compete on cost and craftsmanship.
- Engineering products: UK happens to be the sixth largest destination of our engineering products, grossing $ 4.28 billion currently. With tariff eliminated now under CETA, this is expected to touch $ 7.5 billion by 2029-30, exhibiting a robust 12-20% CAGR and will help in achieving India's overall target of $ 300 billion in engineering goods exports by 2030.

Mobility is the quieter story, but arguably the one with a wider reach. The Double Contribution Convention, taking effect the same day as CETA, ends the practice of Indian professionals on UK assignment paying social security twice — once at home, once abroad — and stretches the exemption window from three years to five. Indian officials expect this to help more than 75,000 professionals, easing cost pressures for IT services firms, engineering consultancies and fintech companies.

WHAT UK GAINS — MOSTLY ON A LONGER CLOCK

India carries the highest average tariff of any G20 economy, and its steepest peaks have historically sat on exactly the goods UK most wants to sell. Understandably, CETA does not eliminate those peaks overnight, but it commits to dismantling them on a fixed, published timetable. A few sectors that offer exciting prospects are:

- **Scotch whisky and gin:** duties are halved immediately, from 150% to 75%, and are set to fall to 40% within ten years. Some studies project UK's exports could climb from around £250 million to £1 billion within five years, aimed at discerning target audience in India.
- **Automobiles:** tariffs north of 100% fall to 10% under a quota, phased over five to fifteen years by vehicle category. India's sub-£40,000 electric vehicle (EV) segment stays carved out, a deliberate shield for domestic manufacturers still building scale.
- **Cosmetics and medical devices:** duties as high as 22% disappear, either immediately or over a ten-year runway, opening India's premium retail shelf to British consumer brands.
- **Financial and professional services:** For UK, CETA widens access into the Indian market that many previously used to rank among the most restrictive services economies.

GUARDRAILS, NOT JUST GIVEAWAYS

What keeps CETA from reading like a one-way concession is the presence of real protections on both sides. India has, arguably, ring-fenced its steel sector while still preserving UK market access for roughly 85% of its steel exports, using a mix of country-specific quotas, residual quotas and the UK's Authorised Use Scheme. The mass-market EV segment gets similar treatment through price thresholds and quota ceilings. Perhaps the more interesting provision, though, is cumulation — the rule allowing a UK manufacturer to use Indian-origin components, or an Indian manufacturer to use UK-origin ones, without losing preferential tariff treatment on the finished good. That single clause does more to encourage genuinely shared supply chains than any tariff cut on its own.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE AUTHOR ARE PERSONAL

CETA IMPACT

For Indian exporters in textiles, leather, marine products and engineering, the priority is clear: verify rules-of-origin documents and tariff classifications now, as benefits begin from July 15. Companies with employees on UK assignments should update global mobility policies and secure Certificates of Coverage to avail the DCC's five-year exemption.

British exporters, particularly in spirits, automobiles and cosmetics, are looking at a wider horizon — real gains, but ones that reward patience, bear fruits through continuous investments and sustained market-building over any expectation of a quick payoff.

CETA should not be viewed as a one-off tariff-cutting event but as a long-term, forward-looking measure for mutual gains. Some initial execution complexities and teething issues are expected. Businesses that align with government policy provisions, adapt their operating models and adopt agile cross-border frameworks will be better positioned to unlock sustainable value. Experts believe CETA will significantly ease trade between India and the UK and serve as a catalyst for the long-term transformation of bilateral economic engagement.

IN-DEPTH

LEARNING ONE MORE LANGUAGE HELPS INTELLECT

The Supreme Court's refusal to stay the implementation of the three-language policy is a timely reminder that education reforms should not become casualties of political contestation. Observing that learning an additional language causes no harm, the court underscored a simple truth: multilingualism is an asset in an increasingly interconnected world. Far from threatening one's mother tongue, acquiring another language broadens intellectual horizons, improves communication skills and expands employment opportunities.

The controversy, however, is less about education than about identity and federalism. Several states fear that the policy could become a vehicle for imposing a particular language, thereby undermining India's rich linguistic diversity. Such concerns cannot be dismissed lightly, given the emotional and cultural significance attached to regional languages.

The way forward lies in balancing national objectives with regional sensitivities. The Centre must reassure states that the policy will remain flexible and that no language will be forced upon unwilling learners. Equally, political parties should avoid turning language into an electoral weapon.

EXODUS FROM ISRO MATTER OF CONCERN

Before India celebrates its next major space milestone, it must confront a less visible challenge—the growing loss of scientific talent. The reported exit of more than 100 scientists from critical programmes, including Gaganyaan, should have rung alarm bells much earlier. That the government has now tightened the rules governing resignations and exits reflects recognition of the seriousness of the problem. Yet restricting departures can only be a temporary response.

India's space programme has earned worldwide respect by delivering complex missions at relatively low cost. Such achievements rest not merely on technology but on highly skilled scientists and engineers whose expertise is acquired over years of training and experience. When they leave in significant numbers, the loss goes beyond manpower; it erodes institutional memory and delays ambitious projects.

> India's rapidly expanding private space ecosystem is itself a sign of success. Movement of talent between the public and private sectors is natural in a maturing industry

The reasons behind the exodus deserve equal attention. Better salaries in the private space sector, opportunities abroad, limited career progression, or concerns over work-life balance may all be contributing factors. Unless these structural issues are addressed, tighter exit regulations could become a source of frustration rather than a solution. Talented professionals should remain because they see a rewarding future, not because leaving has become more difficult.

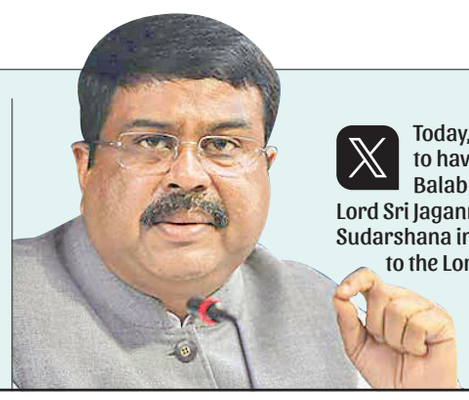
India's rapidly expanding private space ecosystem is itself a sign of success. Movement of talent between the public and private sectors is natural in a maturing industry. The challenge for the government is to create conditions that encourage scientists to stay with national missions while also fostering collaboration with private enterprises.

The answer lies in competitive compensation, transparent career advancement, greater research autonomy, and recognition of scientific excellence.

TOP TWEETS

Best wishes on the auspicious occasion of Rath Yatra. May the blessings of Lord Jagannath bring peace, health, happiness, and prosperity for all. Jai Jagannath!

Dr. S. Jaishankar
@DrSJaishankar



Today, it is my great fortune to have the darshan of Lord Balabhadra, Mother Subhadra, Lord Sri Jagannath, and the Chakra Raja Sudarshana in the grand Ratha Yatra. I pray to the Lord for the well-being of all.

Dharmendra Pradhan
@dpradhanbjp

SPIRITUAL SPEAK

Whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness rises, I manifest myself to restore balance and uphold dharma.

BHAGAVAD GITA

● Vol 8 ● Issue No. 41 ● RNI NO. RAJENG/2019/77764. **Printed and published by Anita Hada Sangwan** on behalf of First Express Publishers. Printed at Bhaskar Printing Press, D.B. Corp Limited, Shivdaspura, Tonk Road, Jaipur. Published at 304, 3rd Floor, City Mall, Bhagwan Das Road, C-Scheme, Jaipur-302001, Rajasthan. Phone 0141-4920504. ● **Editor-In-Chief: Dr Jagdeesh Chandra** ● **Managing Editor: Pawan Arora** ● **Editor: Anita Hada Sangwan** responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act

Shree Cement

BANGUR CEMENT

SOLID घर

सिर्फ़

BANGUR CEMENT

USE FOR SOLID CONCRETE

1800 1022

bangurcare@shreecement.com

PM Modi to flag off India's first hydrogen train in Jind today

PTI
Chandigarh

Prime Minister will flag off India's first hydrogen-powered train between Jind and Sonipat at Jind railway station on Friday.

With this, India would join a select group of countries that have operational hydrogen-powered trains.

The prime minister will lay the foundation stone and launch various development projects worth around Rs 14,700 crore at Eklavya Stadium, Jind. He will also address the gathering on the occasion.

On Friday, after his Jind visit, Modi will also travel to Chandigarh in the afternoon where he will lay the foundation stone and inaugurate various development projects worth over Rs 4,700 crore, an official statement said. He will also address the gathering on the occasion.

Later, he will visit Jalandhar in Punjab where he will lay the foundation stone and inaugurate multiple development projects worth over Rs 5,470 crore.

During his Haryana visit, the prime minister will flag off India's first hydrogen-powered train between Jind and Sonipat (89-km stretch), marking an important step towards the adoption of clean and sustainable mobility in the railway sector.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Designed, engineered and integrated in India, the train has been developed using indigenous technology, reflecting the country's growing capabilities in advanced railway engineering.

The train is powered by hydrogen fuel cell technology, which converts hydrogen into electricity to propel the train. The process produces only water vapour as a by-product, resulting in zero carbon emissions during operation.

Compared to diesel trains, they eliminate tailpipe emissions, lower dependence on fossil fuels and fossil fuel imports, and operate with significantly less noise.

Unlike conventional electric trains, they do not require continuous overhead electrification infrastructure, as electricity is generated onboard through hydrogen fuel cells, making them a clean and efficient solution.

The use of green hydrogen also reduces dependence on electricity generated from fossil fuel-based thermal power plants, supporting India's transition to sustainable transport.

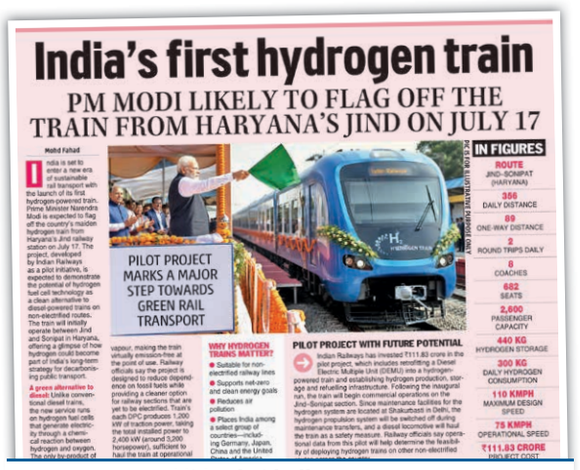
India's hydrogen train features a 10-coach configuration, making it among the longest hydrogen-powered passenger trains developed so far. Its 3,200 HP propulsion system makes it one of the most powerful hydrogen-powered trainsets in operation.

At Jind, Modi will also launch National Highway projects worth over Rs 12,470 crores in Haryana. The prime minister will launch the 157.92 km long four-lane, fully access-controlled Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway (packages 1 to 5), developed at a cost of around Rs 9,680 crore. The Greenfield corridor forms part of the 667 km Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway.

The expressway will reduce travel time between Delhi and Katra from about 14 hours to nearly 6 hours, while cutting the Delhi-Amritsar journey from about 8 hours to 4 hours, a statement said. The project is expected to significantly decongest NH-44 (GT Road), boost pilgrim and tourist traffic to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, and catalyse industrial and logistics development along the corridor.

The prime minister will also inaugurate the 33.81 km four-lane, partially access-controlled Ambala-Kala Amb Highway on NH-7 and NH-344. The highway will strengthen connectivity between the Ambala urban agglomeration and the Kala Amb industrial belt, improve road links between Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, facilitate tourist movement to the hill regions and reduce logistics costs for industries in the Kala Amb area.

The 40.60 km Jind-Gohana Greenfield Highway on NH-352A will also be opened. The new highway will reduce travel time between Jind and Gohana from about two hours to just 40 minutes, benefiting commuters, freight transport and the agriculturally significant Jind-Gohana region.


India's first hydrogen train
PM MODI LIKELY TO FLAG OFF THE TRAIN FROM HARYANA'S JIND ON JULY 17
Mohd Fahad
India is set to enter a new era of sustainable rail transport with the launch of its first hydrogen-powered train. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to flag off the country's maiden hydrogen train from Haryana's Jind railway station on July 17. The project, developed by Indian Railways as a pilot initiative, is expected to demonstrate the potential of hydrogen fuel cell technology as a clean alternative to diesel-powered trains on non-electrified routes. The train will initially operate between Jind and Sonipat in Haryana, offering a glimpse of how hydrogen could become part of India's long-term strategy for decarbonising public transport.
A green alternative to diesel: Unlike conventional diesel trains, the new service runs on hydrogen fuel cells that generate electricity through a chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen. The only by-product of vapour, making the train virtually emission-free at the point of use. Railway officials say the project is designed to reduce dependence on fossil fuels while providing a cleaner option for railway sections that are yet to be electrified. Train's each DPC produces 1,200 kW of traction power, taking the total installed power to 2,400 kW (around 3,200 horsepower), sufficient to haul the train at operational
PILOT PROJECT MARKS A MAJOR STEP TOWARDS GREEN RAIL TRANSPORT
WHY HYDROGEN TRAINS MATTER?
Suitable for non-electrified railway lines
Supports net-zero and clean energy goals
Reduces air pollution
Places India among a select group of countries—including Germany, Japan, China and the United
PILOT PROJECT WITH FUTURE POTENTIAL
Indian Railways has invested ₹111.83 crore in the pilot project, which includes retrofitting a Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) into a hydrogen-powered train and establishing hydrogen production, storage and refuelling infrastructure. Following the inaugural run, the train will begin commercial operations on the Jind–Sonipat section. Since maintenance facilities for the hydrogen system are located at Shakurbasti in Delhi, the hydrogen propulsion system will be switched off during maintenance transfers, and a diesel locomotive will haul the train as a safety measure. Railway officials say operational data from this pilot will help determine the feasibility of deploying hydrogen trains on other non-electrified
IN FIGURES
ROUTE JIND–SONIPAT (HARYANA)
356 DAILY DISTANCE
89 ONE-WAY DISTANCE
2 ROUND TRIPS DAILY
8 COACHES
682 SEATS
2,600 PASSENGER CAPACITY
440 KG HYDROGEN STORAGE
300 KG DAILY HYDROGEN CONSUMPTION
110 KMPH MAXIMUM DESIGN SPEED
75 KMPH OPERATIONAL SPEED
₹111.83 CRORE PROJECT COST
You read it in **First india** on **JULY 10, 2026**

Rlys approves India's first daily hydrogen train
ANI
New Delhi
The Ministry of Railways has approved the introduction of India's first daily hydrogen-powered train service between Jind and Sonipat, according to sources.
The service will operate
You read it in **First india** on **JULY 11, 2026**

Modi will also dedicate major medical institutions to the nation: Pandit Neki Ram Sharma Government Medical College, Bhiwani, Maharishi Chyawan Medical College and Rao Tula Ram Hospital, Koriawas, Narnaul. The PM will also lay the foundation stone of a Sikh Museum at Kurukshetra that will showcase the history of Sikhism, the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, their courage, sacrifices and the invaluable contribution of the Sikh community to India's civilisation

POLITICAL POPCORN

POLITICAL
POPCORN

TRADE DEAL WITH BRITAIN; FARMERS' WORRIES!

OPPOTUNITIES V/S AMMUNITION: HOPE HARVESTED FROM LONDON'S BREEZE!

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the India-UK Free Trade Agreement as a boost for small businesses and farmers. Meanwhile, the opposition is scrutinizing the fine print, wondering whether British potatoes and Indian samosas truly strengthen self-reliance. The government projects global opportunities, opponents search for ammunition.

SUPRIYA'S 'SUSPENSE' OVER DELIMITATION BILL!

MONSOON SESSION: NO LIMITS TO THE SUSPENSE OVER SEAT LIMITS!

Ahead of Parliament's monsoon session, the Delimitation Bill has intensified political calculations. While the NDA works to secure numbers, Supriya Sule's remark that "all options remain open" has sparked speculation. Observers debate whether it signals strategic pressure or shifting alliances. The government expects unexpected support, whereas the opposition is striving to maintain unity before the crucial vote.

CLASS BUNKERS JOIN 'REVOLUTION' SYLLABUS!

RAHUL GANDHI'S NEW COACHING CLASS ON EDU TARGETS YOUNG VOTERS

Rahul Gandhi has again criticized India's education system, describing it as an "extortion mechanism." Political observers see the remarks as an attempt to attract young voters before upcoming state elections. Government leaders counter that the National Education Policy is already transforming education. The debate now is whether Rahul's campaign will inspire meaningful reforms or merely strengthen the opposition's narrative.

CLARIFICATION ON KUDANKULAM DATA BREACH!

NPCIL REJECTS DATA BREACH CLAIMS, OPPN'S SECURITY ALARM DEFLATES!

Reports of leaked files from the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant quickly triggered alarm online. NPCIL promptly denied that any sensitive information had been compromised, insisting nuclear safety remains fully intact. Political observers noted how rapidly the controversy escalated before official clarification. The government has also ordered a security audit, highlighting the growing challenge of cyber misinformation and public trust.

DIGITAL INDIA CAUGHT BETWEEN REELS, REALITY!

GOVT'S FIREWALL AGAINST EASY ACCESS TO ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY!

The Supreme Court has described minors' easy access to online pornography as a serious public concern, urging the government to examine stronger safeguards. Political observers see the issue as a delicate balance between protecting children and preserving free expression. The IT Ministry is reportedly considering stricter technological measures, while all sides await how the government defines responsible internet regulation.

COMPILED BY SANDEEP MISHRA

HC gives final 2 weeks to Kejri to respond to CBI's plea against discharge

PTI
New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Thursday granted a final opportunity to AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak, asking them to respond within two weeks to the CBI's plea against a trial court order discharging them in the liquor policy case.

Justice Manoj Jain deferred hearing on CBI's revision petition after none appeared for the discharged accused persons due to work abstention by high court lawyers, and listed the case for hearing arguments on behalf of the investigating agency on August 17 and 18.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, said the three AAP leaders were earlier given several opportunities by the high court to file their replies, and the case has been "sufficiently delayed."

AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal

"In any case if I am giving a date, we will make it clear that they would be at liberty to file a reply," Justice Jain responded.

The judge added that a time frame shall be fixed for hearing submissions on behalf of the discharged accused persons.

Uttarakhand is epicentre of paper leak, alleges Rahul

PTI
Dehradun

A day before his interaction with students in Dehradun, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said Uttarakhand has turned into an epicentre of paper leaks and asserted that he will not let the future of youth be auctioned off.

Gandhi said he is visiting Dehradun on July 17th because 'Devbhoomi' has been turned into an "epicentre" of paper leaks.

"A 'system' has taken root here regarding UKSSSC (Uttarakhand Subordinate Service Selection Commission) exams, where positions like Patwari or Lekhpal are secured not through merit, but at rates fixed by criminals," alleged LoP in Lok Sabha Gandhi.

ED raids 13 locations in 4 states in terror funding, infiltration case

PTI
Lucknow

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted searches at multiple locations in four states in a money laundering investigation linked to an alleged terror funding and illegal infiltration network, officials said.

They said about 13 premises in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and West Bengal were raided under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) by the Lucknow zonal office of the central agency.

The 2024 ED case stems from an Uttar Pradesh ATS (Anti-Terrorist Squad) FIR related to an organised syndicate allegedly involved in facilitating illegal infiltration of Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals into India, arranging forged Indian identity documents and aiding their rehabilitation in various parts of the country.

प्रवर्तन निदेशालय
ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE
ज़ोन-I / ZONE-I
KAISER-I-HIND BUILDING

The 2024 ED case stems from an Uttar Pradesh ATS (Anti-Terrorist Squad) FIR related to an organised syndicate allegedly involved in facilitating illegal infiltration of Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals into India

The ATS probe found a "deep-rooted" financial network involving certain charitable trusts and entities allegedly receiving substantial foreign contributions and diverting the same through multiple bank accounts, mule accounts and layered transactions to facilitate illegal activities, the officials said.

It also indicated the use of cash withdrawals and small-value transfers to suspected beneficiaries, they said.

COMMITS LEGAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION REFORMS

SCBA expresses solidarity with Sonam Wangchuk

ANI
New Delhi

Expressing concern over the deteriorating health of education reformer Sonam Wangchuk during his ongoing indefinite fast, the Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) on Thursday adopted a resolution appealing to him to end his protest.

The Bar body said that while his movement had awakened the nation's conscience, the country needed his continued leadership rather than risking his life.

The resolution was adopted at a meeting of the SCBA Executive Committee convened to discuss Wangchuk's fast. The Committee noted that his protest had drawn national attention to issues concerning the NEET examination and the larger state of the country's education system. It described his lifelong contribution to innovation, institution-building and public service as an inspiration for young people and society at large. According to the resolution, Wangchuk's hunger strike has once again highlighted the importance of moral courage in public life and reminded citizens of their responsibility to uphold constitutional values.

HUNGER
Doctors examine climate activist Sonam Wangchuk during his hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi on Thursday.

The Committee observed that his protest had become a call for strengthening the nation's moral and institutional foundations. The SCBA also expressed disappointment that despite Wangchuk taking such an extreme step for educational reforms, institutions had failed to respond with the urgency and sensitivity the situation demanded.

FI TOON

You aren't the only one people are leaving.!!
News
ISRO shaken by over 100 scientists' resignations.
TMC
SHEKHAR

Latest round of violence shows no sign of letup as US strikes deep into Iran

Strait of Hormuz is red line: Iran

Agencies
Dubai

The spokesperson for Iran's top military command on Thursday said they would not permit US interfering in the Strait of Hormuz, calling it a red line. He warned that Iran would target infrastructure across West Asia if US President Donald Trump threatened to attack Iranian infrastructure.

This comes after the The US Central Command said the military completed its latest wave of strikes on Iran following Trump's direction.

"US forces struck Iranian command centers, air defense sites, missile and drone capabilities, and coastal surveillance facilities," it said in a statement, adding it also hit targets in Bandar Abbas, home to Iran's largest port and key navy and Revolutionary Guards facilities on the Strait of Hormuz.

The two warring nations exchanged strikes on the fifth consecutive day. US said targeted "coastal defense systems and cruise missile storage and launch sites" on Greater Tunb island in the Strait of Hormuz.

The USS George HW Bush in the Arabian Sea. The US navy is blockading Iranian ports & taking part in strikes on the country.

'COWARDLY CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN'

Iran on Thursday accused the United States of launching a "barbaric attack" after a fresh round of airstrikes, some of which impacted a child cancer treatment department in a hospital which provided chemotherapy treatment for cancer patients. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said it constitutes a cowardly war crime against the most innocent of human beings.

'CLOSE RED SEA IF US HITS POWER NETWORK'

Iran has asked Yemen's Houthi movement to stand ready to close the Red Sea oil route if the United States strikes Iranian power infrastructure, three sources told the media agency on Thursday, posing a potent new threat to global energy supplies. The sources said the Houthis had been informed recently of Tehran's request, which has not been previously reported.

MORE ON ESCALATING CRISIS IN WEST ASIA

- Recent waves of U.S. strikes on Iran aimed at forcing open the Strait of Hormuz are also targeting Iranian military capabilities the U.S. would want to destroy before executing more complex operations against Iran, three U.S. officials said.
- Iran and the United States exchanged intensified fire on Thursday in a week-long escalation that has all but torn up last month's truce, though Iran's release of a U.S. citizen pointed towards a path to avert the resumption of all-out war.
- Attacks on Saudi Arabia by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis this week have frustrated Pakistan and threaten to draw Islamabad into the conflict, complicating any future role it may have as a mediator between the United States and Iran.
- The United States and Iran escalated their attacks overnight, even as the two countries signaled that they were open to diplomacy to end a war that has now narrowed its focus to control of the Strait of Hormuz.

5.9-magnitude quake jolts New Zealand

Agencies
Wellington

New Zealand authorities on Thursday lifted the tsunami warning issued after a 5.9-magnitude earthquake struck off the west coast of the South Island, saying the threat had eased following a revised assessment of the quake.

The National Emergency Management Agency said the advisory had been downgraded from a warning after determining that the earthquake was smaller than initially estimated, news agency AFP reported.

Authorities, who had earlier urged people in affected coastal areas to "move immediately" to higher ground, later advised residents to remain cautious of "strong and unusual currents" along the shoreline.

Soon after the earthquake, emergency officials had asked people in affected coastal areas to "move immediately" to higher ground as a precaution. The earthquake struck at a depth of 76 kilometres, about 83 kilometres west of Queenstown, a popular tourist destination on the South Island, according to the US Geological Survey.

People living in the region described experiencing a powerful jolt. The manager of a hotel in nearby Te Anau told AFP she "could hear it coming first".

Geonet said the earthquake struck about 40km north of Te Anau at a depth of 53km on Thursday.

FROM P1...

Major organisational...

The comment has intensified discussions in political circles. Sources claim that after extensive meetings over the formation of the national team, names that were considered final have undergone a last-minute review, with directions for major changes.

Some unexpected faces may find a place in the organisational team, while certain prominent names could be dropped from the final list.

The proposed changes, spanning both the government and the organisation, are reportedly being closely monitored at the highest levels of central leadership.

The reshuffle, if implemented, could give the organisation a new direction and significantly alter the internal balance.

IN BRIEF

Sindhu stuns world No. 5 Han to enter Japan QF

Tokyo: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu produced one of her best performances of the season to outclass world No. 5 Han Yue of China in straight games & storm into quarterfinals of Japan Open Super 750 badminton tournament on Thursday.

Escalating Israeli strikes kill five people in Gaza

Cairo: Israeli strikes killed at least five Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, Palestinian health officials said, as a U.S.-based research group reported a surge in Israeli attacks to levels not seen since the latest truce took effect in October.

Algeria: 11 kids killed, 19 hurt in orphanage fire

Algiers (Algeria): A fire at an orphanage near the capital of Algeria killed 11 children and injured 19 early Thursday, authorities said. The ages of the victims have not been released by authorities, who did not report any adult fatalities or injuries.

Donald Trump revives Green Card benefit rule

Agencies
Washington

The Trump administration is reviving a rule that could deny green cards to immigrants who use public benefits that could include food stamps, Medicaid, housing vouchers and others.

The policy, known as "public charge," appeared on Thursday in the Federal Register and will be formally published on July 20. The policy was first implemented in February 2020 as one of President Donald Trump's moves to limit legal immigration during his first administration.

Under the policy, applicants for green cards have to show they wouldn't be burdens to the country or "public charges." Its return comes when the Republican administration is implementing a hardline policy to curb both illegal and legal immigration, and when the cost of healthcare and food is rising.

"Under President Trump, USCIS is restoring the basic principle that immigrants must be able to support themselves," the post said. The agency said the rule will take effect September18.

Canadian smoke blankets NYC

The downtown skyline is covered by wildfire smoke during a heat wave, as seen from Toronto, Ontario, Canada on Thursday.

The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor is seen through a cover of wildfire smoke in Jersey City, New Jersey, U.S. on Thursday.

Have taken note of reports: China on India's bid for non-permanent UNSC seat

Agencies
Beijing

China on Thursday said it has "taken note of relevant reports" about India's bid for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for the 2028-29 period.

EAM S Jaishankar launched India's official campaign for the non-permanent seat at the UNSC at an event at the UN headquarters, attended by ambassadors, diplomats and officials.

Jaishankar said that India's approach to the UN is rooted in 'SHANTI: Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity', as he outlined in detail New Delhi's priorities for the UNSC term.

"China has taken note of relevant reports," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media when asked about China's view on India's announcement to contest for a non-permanent seat at the UNSC.

India last sat at UNSC horseshoe high table in 2021-22, its 8th time in powerful 15-nation UN body after tenures in 1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 & 2011-2012.

India responds after Hyd man critically injured in suspected hate attack in Utah

Agencies
Washington

The Consulate General of India in San Francisco has reacted to the racist attack on an Indian man inside a shopping mall near Salt Lake City in the US state of Utah because of his faith. The Indian mission said it was deeply saddened by the tragic stabbing of Hyderabad resident Syed Sohailuddin, who suffered over 15 stab wounds and remains in critical condition.

In a statement posted on X, the consulate said it is in close contact with Sohailuddin's family and friends and is ready to provide all possible consular assistance. "We remain engaged with local authorities and will continue to monitor the matter closely," the post read.

The Utah police have arrested one Peter Michael Larsen on suspicion of attempted murder and carrying a prohibited dangerous weapon. Larsen told police he repeatedly stabbed Sohailuddin because "he believes he is a catalyst and he intends to kill Muslims."

IS PAKISTAN ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE?

A crumbling Pakistan and the volcano of internal unrest

Ram Gopal Jat
Senior Journalist

Pakistan is currently grappling with the most severe existential crisis in its history. While it has established itself as a nuclear-armed nation on the geopolitical map, internally, the country appears to be collapsing like a house of cards across administrative, economic, and strategic fronts. Three key regions, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), are currently ablaze with internal discontent and rebellion.

Ironically, the government in Islamabad and the military rulers at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi are seeking solutions to these crises through the barrel of a gun and repressive policies rather than through political acumen or democratic dialogue. Consequently, the unrest has reached a point where the path to reconciliation appears extremely narrow.

The situation in Balochistan has become particularly dire. Although it is Pakistan's largest province by area and smallest by population, it has for decades been a victim of neglect, exploitation, and systematic human rights violations. Balochistan is rich in natural resources, specifically natural gas, coal, gold, and copper, yet, ironically, the benefits of these resources are being siphoned off into Islamabad's coffers and Chinese projects (CPEC) rather than reaching the Baloch people. Mega-projects like the Gwadar Port have failed to provide employment to local fishermen and residents, thereby adding fuel to the fire of separatism in the region.

Pakistan worries about being drawn into US-Iran conflict. Attacks on Saudi Arabia by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis this week have frustrated Pakistan & threaten to draw Islamabad into the conflict, complicating any future role it may have as a mediator between the United States and Iran.

Recent well-planned and lethal suicide attacks carried out by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and other separatist organizations have made it clear that Baloch insurgency is no longer limited to sporadic militant incidents; instead, it has evolved into a well-organized guerrilla war. In response, the Pakistani army has launched large-scale military campaigns such as 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' and 'Operation Shaban,' claiming to have killed hundreds of militants. However, history bears witness to the fact that military repression can never completely crush ideological and political movements.

Although Balochistan has not technically declared itself an independent nation and is internationally recognized as part of Pakistan, the government's writ has eroded to such an extent on the ground that the Pakistani army is forced to operate like a foreign occupying force, confined within fortified perimeters in one of its own provinces. Issues such as 'enforced disappearances' and the proliferation of military checkpoints are completely alienating Baloch youth from Pakistan. While Balochistan may not have technically slipped out of Pakistan's control, administratively, it is fracturing significantly. Meanwhile, the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has deteriorated sharply. The region is paying a bloody price for Pakistan's flawed strategic policy of distinguishing between 'good Taliban' and 'bad Taliban.' Following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, Pakistan had hoped its western border would become secure and provide 'strategic depth.' Instead, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has utilized Afghan soil to openly challenge the Pakistani state apparatus in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Organizations like the TTP and ISIS-K have intensified attacks on police outposts, military convoys, and civilian targets. Consequently, military skirmishes along the Durand Line, the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and airstrikes conducted by the Pakistan Air Force within Afghan territory have brought the two neighbors to the brink of war. The army has failed to curb terrorism, and the ordinary Pashtun population is bearing the brunt of this, forced to endure the squeeze between army operations and the forced extortion of taxes by terrorists. Public sentiment in the region now appears to be firmly aligned against the state.

Meanwhile, the situation in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) has caused Pakistan the greatest international embarrassment and exposed its true face. The reality behind the façade of 'Azad Kashmir' a region Pakistan has for decades described as its 'jugular vein', has now been fully unmasked. The historic mass movement that has emerged in PoK under the banner of the 'Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee' (JAAC) stands in direct opposition to Pakistan's colonial mindset.

This movement is driven not by foreign powers, but by the pangs of hunger and demands for basic rights. While Pakistan's Punjab province receives extremely cheap electricity from the Mangla Dam built on PoK's rivers, the citizens of PoK are forced to pay exorbitant electricity bills and heavy taxes. A similar situation prevails regarding subsidies for flour and other essential commodities.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE AUTHOR ARE PERSONAL

FIRST INDIA
2ND FRONT

THOUGHT OF THE DAY
Education should not fill the mind; it should open it.
Dr Jagdeesh Chandra, CMD & Editor-in-Chief

Develop a model for upkeep of martyrs' memorials: CM Sharma

Plan initiatives to showcase Indian Army's valour to public, CM asserts

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Thursday directed Sainik Kalyan Department officials to work sensitively on issues related to martyrs' families, ex-servicemen and serving soldiers.

Chairing a review meeting, Sharma said soldiers symbolise dedication and sacrifice, continuing to inspire society even after retirement. He directed officials to prepare a plan to showcase the Indian Army's heroic stories and symbols of bravery among the public.

The CM also stressed proper maintenance of martyrs' memorials and development of a uniform model across Rajasthan. He said the state govt is committed to the welfare and dignity of soldiers and their families. Officials presented details of ongoing schemes and initiatives.

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma chairs a review meeting of Sainik Kalyan Department in Jaipur on Thursday. Chief Secretary V Srinivas, Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Bhaskar A Sawant, Additional Chief Secretary to CM Akhil Arora and others were present.

OVER 24L RECEIVE HEALTH BENEFITS

These Seva Shivirs also delivered major gains in healthcare. More than 24.84 lakh people received health check-ups and treatment, 11.08 lakh were screened for TB, and 4.65 lakh women underwent screening for oral, breast and cervical cancers. Over 3.11 lakh livestock insurance policies and 47,000+ crop insurance policies were issued. Thousands of cases related to social security pensions, Jan Dhan and Jan Aadhaar were also resolved.

Under CM Sharma, 18,953 Seva Shivirs held across Raj

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, Grameen and Shehari Seva Shivirs have emerged as a model of efficient and sensitive governance. A total of 18,953 camps held across Rajasthan between June 12 and July 15 benefited lakhs of people by ensuring last-mile delivery of services.

Wide impact from cities to villages; Lakhs benefited under one roof, old cases resolved; Seva Shivirs emerge as hallmark of good governance

In rural areas, 10,564 camps facilitated welfare scheme access and resolved long-pending cases, including 1.90 lakh mutations, 46,885 boundary demarcations, 26,711 land partitions and over 17,000 pathway disputes.

More than 2.19 lakh revenue records were corrected, 3.37 lakh certificates issued, and over 2.12 lakh farmers registered.

In urban areas, 8,389 camps provided 42,252 pattas, 13,242 name transfers, building plan approvals and other civic services, strengthening the governmet's inclusive Antyodaya vision across Raj.

CM meets Ministers, MPs & MLAs; Reviews regional development concerns

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Thursday met ministers, Members of Parliament and MLAs at his residence, holding detailed discussions on regional development and public concerns.

Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Avinash Gehlot and MP Manju Sharma paid a courtesy call on the Chief Minister. MLAs Kailash Verma, Udaylal Bhadana, Govind Ranipuria, Kaluram Meghwal, Laxman Singh Meghwal, Ladulal and Jitendra Gothwal also met Sharma.

During the meetings, the Chief Minister reviewed the progress of development works in various constituencies, expansion of basic amenities and key issues affecting the general public. He emphasised the need for timely execution of projects and ensuring that government schemes reach the last mile effectively.

Cabinet Minister Avinash Gehlot calls on Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma at the Chief Minister's Residence in Jaipur on Thursday.

Courtesy Meeting

Ministry of External Affairs Secretary Sripriya Ranganathan calls on Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma in Jaipur on Thursday.

Guv: India has been a hub of ancient medical wisdom

First India Bureau
Jaipur

Governor Haribhau Bagade on Thursday said India has, since ancient times, been rooted in a rich tradition of medical knowledge anchored in ethics and integrity. Addressing the convocation ceremony of Homoeopathy University, Jaipur, at Birla Auditorium, he described homoeopathy as an effective system and called for advancing it through research.

He said Ayurveda, over 5,000 years old, is now globally recognised, and noted that homoeopathic medicines are derived from natural sources such as plants, roots, minerals and extracts. Citing a Pune-based doctor who shifted from allopathy to homoeopathy after recovery, he stressed that any effective treatment should be adopted. Referring to historical disruptions like Nalanda's destruction, he underlined the need to preserve India's knowledge legacy. Union Minister of State for AYUSH Prataprao Jadhav said traditional systems promote holistic well-being and urged youth to strengthen healthcare through research. Degrees and awards were also conferred.

Governor Haribhau Bagade during the convocation ceremony of the Homoeopathy University, Jaipur at Birla Auditorium on Thursday. Union MoS Prataprao Jadhav, Ex- MP and Founder of the University, Dr Manoj Rajoria were present.

With a 5,000-year legacy, Ayurveda is now global. Homeopathy shares its natural base. Young doctors must step up to strengthen healthcare.
HARIBHAU BAGADE, GOVERNOR

'Tourism vital to India's economic transformation'

First India Bureau
New Delhi

Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, speaking at the 'FAITH Tourism Conclave 2026' in New Delhi on Thursday, said tourism is set to become a key pillar of employment, entrepreneurship, investment and cultural heritage preservation under the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'.

"Embodying the spirit of 'Incredible India: Invaluable Economy', Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to establishing tourism as a powerful driver of growth and development," Shekhawat said.

He said a strong partnership between the government and the tourism industry will play a vital role in making India one of the world's most attractive and preferred tourism destinations.

Union Minister Shekhawat also met WTTC President and CEO Gloria Guevara, with discussions focusing on boosting inbound tourism, enhancing India's global tourism outreach and improving ranking frameworks for a competitive, sustainable and future-ready tourism ecosystem.

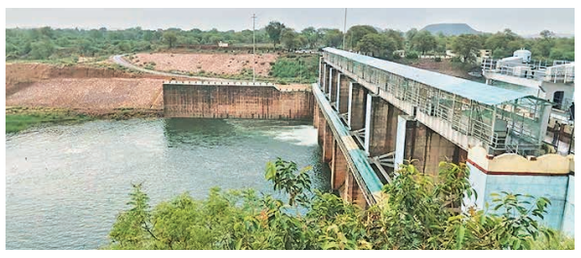
Union Minister GS Shekhawat addresses during the FAITH Tourism Conclave 2026 in New Delhi on Thursday.

Panchna Dam clears trial, ready for water distribution

First India Bureau
Karauli

Under the direction of Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, a comprehensive technical test of the water release system at Panchna Dam was conducted on Thursday ahead of irrigation water supply to farmers. The trial of sluice gates releasing water into command area canals was successfully completed, along with testing of the lift irrigation system for non-command areas.

Bharatpur Divisional Commissioner Nalini Kathotia directed officials to ensure all technical arrangements are functional and secure before water release for uninterrupted supply. Technical inspections of Gambhiri River-linked gates were conducted, with Water Resources Dept officials reviewing the system's efficiency. Members of the Command & Panchna-Gudla Sangharsh Samiti thanked CM Sharma for resolving the 20-year-old issue via dialogue. Karauli, Sawai Madhopur and officials attended.



Bharatpur Divisional Commissioner Nalini Kathotia reviews technical testing of Panchna Dam's water discharge system ahead of irrigation water release in Karauli dist on Thursday.

VIDESH SAMPARK- STATE OUTREACH CONFERENCE

Going abroad now easier as Passport services speed up: CS

CS V Srinivas addresses during the 'Videsh Sampark - State Outreach Conference,' jointly organised by MEA & State government at RIC in Jaipur on Thursday. Also seen here are ACS, Dept of Non-Resident Rajasthanis (DORA), Shikhar Agrawal, MEA Secretary (CPV & OIA) Sripriya Ranganathan and DGP Rajeev Kumar Sharma. (Inset) ACS Sandeep Verma, engrossed in a session during the conference at RIC.

First India Bureau
Jaipur

The MEA and Rajasthan government on Thursday organised the "Videsh Sampark – State Outreach Programme" at the Rajasthan International Centre to promote safe and legal overseas migration.

The conference focused on protecting job seekers from fraudulent agents and creating awareness about authorised migration channels, with participation from officials, police and recruitment agencies.

CS V Srinivas said overseas travel processes for jobs and education have been simplified, with faster passport issuance due to quicker police verification.

MEA Secretary (CPV & OIA) Sripriya Ranganathan said the 2017 initiative aims to promote legal migration awareness, while DGP Rajeev Sharma highlighted efforts to boost transparent migration systems.

Under PM Modi, India has strengthened diaspora ties—from Vande Bharat evacuations to faster passports and easier global mobility—while Rajasthan continues active engagement with its overseas community.
V SRINIVAS, CHIEF SECRETARY

Rajasthan Police is working in close coordination across departments to support NRIs in distress, while strengthening transparent and verified processes for safe overseas travel.
RAJEEV KUMAR SHARMA, DGP

India is simplifying overseas travel for jobs and education, promoting safe migration through state-led awareness drives, village outreach & accurate data collection to simplify procedures.
SRIPRIYA RANGANATHAN, MEA SECRETARY (CPV & OIA)

RAJASTHAN HOSTS VIDESH SAMPARK PROGRAMME FOR THE FIRST TIME

Launched by the Ministry of External Affairs in 2017, the Videsh Sampark Programme is being held in Rajasthan for the first time. The initiative has previously been organised in partnership with states such as Telangana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Punjab, Tripura, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Andhra Pradesh.

FIRST INDIA City First

JAIPUR, FRIDAY | JULY 17, 2026

CITY CHANTS JAI JAGANNATH!

The Pink City echoed with chants of 'Jai Jagannath' as thousands of devotees participated in grand Jagannath Rath Yatras, celebrating devotion, faith and Sanatan traditions. P12

SUNIL SHARMA

Dr Jagdeesh Chandra was accorded a floral welcome by Avinash Sehrawat, General Manager, Rambagh Palace, in the presence of Nikhil Anand, Neeranjana Tiwari (Miss Teen Universe India 2025), Shuddhi Mahesh (Miss Teen Earth India 2025), Ruchi Jadhav (Miss Teen Multinational India 2025), Divya Wadhwa (Miss Teen International India 2025) and Aarna Chaturvedi (Miss Teen Diva 2025 First Runner-up)

An evening of elegance, inspiration and celebration marks the gala dinner for Miss Teen Diva 2026 and Mrs India 2026

Royal Soirée

City First brings you exclusive glimpses from a glittering gala dinner hosted at the iconic Rambagh Palace, Jaipur, on Wednesday evening, where the finalists of Miss Teen Diva 2026 and Mrs India 2026, presented by Bharat24: Vision of New India, came together for an unforgettable celebration ahead of their grand finales!

Mitali Dusad

mitalidusad@firstindia.co.in

In a spectacular celebration of beauty, elegance and excellence, Nikhil Anand, National Director of Miss Universe India and Chairman of the Glamanand Group, along with Nishant Anand, Director of the Glamanand Group, hosted a grand gala dinner for the finalists of Miss Teen Diva 2026 and Mrs India 2026 at the iconic Rambagh Palace, Jaipur, on Wednesday evening. The glamorous evening marked the countdown to the much-awaited grand finales, scheduled to be held on July 19 and July 20, respectively, at Zee Studios, Jaipur. The prestigious pageants are being presented by Bharat24: Vision of New India.

Dr Jagdeesh Chandra graced the dinner ceremony and he was accorded a warm floral welcome by Avinash Sehrawat, General Manager of Rambagh Palace, Jaipur, setting the tone for an unforgettable celebration.

Adding further prestige to the occasion were the reigning titleholders of Miss Teen Diva 2025, including Neeranjana Tiwari (Miss Teen Universe India 2025), Shuddhi Mahesh (Miss Teen Earth India 2025), Ruchi Jadhav (Miss Teen Multinational India 2025), Divya Wadhwa (Miss Teen International India 2025), Aarna Chaturvedi (Miss Teen Diva 2025 First Runner-up), along with Kavitha S Wadayar, Mrs India 2025. Their presence inspired the finalists as they shared words of encouragement and motivated them to embrace the journey with confidence, grace and determination. The evening turned even more memorable as Nishant Anand celebrated his birthday amidst the contestants, dignitaries and guests. A cheerful cake-cutting ceremony filled the venue with warmth and joy. Extending his heartfelt wishes, Dr Jagdeesh Chandra congratulated Nishant Anand on his birthday, wishing him good health, happiness and continued success. He also applauded the Glamanand Group for consistently providing a prestigious platform to aspiring women and extended his best wishes for the successful conduct of the upcoming national pageants.

Welcoming the finalists, Nikhil Anand said, "It is a pleasure to welcome these remarkable women to the royal city of Jaipur as they embark on one of the most memorable chapters of their pageant journey. I hope they cherish every experience, forge lasting friendships and step onto the grand finale stage with confidence, grace and determination. I extend my best wishes to each finalist for the days ahead. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Jagdeesh Chandra for his unwavering encouragement and constant support. His association and belief in our vision continue to inspire us to elevate the standards of Indian pageantry year after year." Turn to pg 10-11

> "It is our privilege to host these exceptional women in the royal city of Jaipur. I hope this evening allows them to create beautiful memories before the grand finale. I wish every finalist the very best and encourage them to enjoy every moment of this remarkable journey with confidence, dignity and pride."
>
> —Nikhil Anand, National Director of Miss Universe India & Chairman of Glamanand Group

Top To Bottom: Muskan Bhatia (Telangana), Kamakshi Chopra (Haryana), Jasleen Kaur (Punjab), Aishwarya Malang (Meghalaya) & Shambhavi (Haryana)

Nikhil Anand and Miss Teen Diva 2025 winners Divya Wadhwa, Ruchi Jadhav, Shuddhi Mahesh, Neeranjana Tiwari and Aarna Chaturvedi pose with the stunning Miss Teen Diva 2026 finalists–Jasleen Kaur, Pari Pathak, Yashasvi Dahiya, Shambhavi, Manasvi Myer, Shruti Jha, Hita Shaji, Veda Goud, Shamita Suja, Myra Mishra, Chandamita Roy, Diya Dang, Saanvi Debnath, Kankona Bairagi, Karnika Maurya, Snigdha Bhuyan, Anushka Shankar, Lavanya Govil, Yuvika Choudhary, Muskaaan Bhatia, Vedshri Thakare, Tanvi Balijayapally, Akshita Dabral, Sukruthi Chirra, Gia Agarwal, Kamakshi Chopra, Marjorie Sur, Mannat Singh, Ruchika Walde, Bhumi Deore, Aahna Sayyad, Pristina Kapoor, Aishwariya Malang, Prasuci Panda, Swarnika Kholia, Aishwarya Lad and Rupsa Das, during a special gathering ahead of the prestigious national pageant

Nikhil Anand and Mrs India 2025 Kavitha S Wadayar pose with the accomplished Mrs India 2026 finalists: Akanksha Choudhary, Apurva Parasar, Ashwini Kattimani, Amita Jethani, Kiran Kamble, Kriti Chandan, Kirti Baldwa, Neha Kamsheti, Nisha Sharma, Salony Narang, Shivanshee, Sneha Tiwari, Sweety Khanna and Tanvi Chaudhary

© SUNIL SHARMA

GRANDEUR UNVEILED

From PG 09...

Expressing his gratitude, Nishant Anand said, "Celebrating my birthday in the company of such talented finalists, esteemed guests and our dedicated team made the occasion truly unforgettable. I sincerely thank everyone for their warm wishes and support. We look forward to presenting an inspiring and memorable edition of Miss Teen Diva and Mrs India."

The finalists spent the evening exploring the timeless grandeur of Rambagh Palace, posing for photographs against its magnificent architecture, lush gardens and regal interiors. Enthralled by Jaipur's royal charm, many contestants admired the city's rich heritage and hospitality. They also relished the lavish spread of authentic Rajasthani and international delicacies, describing the culinary experience as one of the highlights of their visit. Several finalists expressed their excitement about competing on the national stage, saying that Jaipur's regal ambience, warm hospitality and the breathtaking beauty of Rambagh Palace had made their journey even more memorable. They appreciated the exquisite cuisine, elegant décor and the opportunity to interact with former titleholders, adding that the evening had boosted their confidence ahead of the finale.

Concluding the evening, Dr Jagdeesh Chandra said, "I extend my heartfelt best wishes to Nikhil Anand, Nishant Anand and the entire Glamanand Group for another successful edition of these prestigious pageants. My best wishes are also with every finalist. May they perform with confidence, celebrate their individuality and make the most of this wonderful opportunity. I wish them all a bright future and a memorable grand finale."

The gala evening concluded on a high note, with finalists, former queens and guests coming together for candid interactions, photographs and shared moments of celebration. As the city prepares for the upcoming grand finales, the gathering reflected not only glamour & competition, but also mentorship and the spirit of empowering women through meaningful platforms and opportunities.

Nishant Anand cuts the celebratory birthday cake, flanked by Dr Jagdeesh Chandra, Nikhil Anand & Miss Teen Diva 2026 finalists

Vedshri Thakare (Maharashtra)

Aahna Sayyad (Pune)

Lavanya Govil (Gurugram)

Shamita Suja (Chennai)

Ruchika Wald (Nagpur)

Clockwise: Akshita Dabral (Chhattisgarh), Karnika Maurya (Lucknow), Kankona Bairagi (Kolkata), Prasuci Panda (Odisha), Aarna Chaturvedi (Miss Teen Diva 2025- 1st Runner-Up), Aishwarya Lad (Pune) & Swarnika Kholia (Odisha)

Hita Shaji (Bangalore)

Gia Agarwal (Uttarakhand)

Sukruthi Chirra (Hyderabad)

Shruti Jha (Bihar)

Yashasvi Dahiya (New Delhi)

Clockwise: Ruchi Jadhav (Miss Teen Multinational India 2025), Chandamita Roy (Tripura), Tanvi Balijaypally (Telangana), Shuddhi Mahesh (Miss Teen Earth India 2025), Neeranjana Tiwari (Miss Teen Universe India 2025), Snigdha Bhuyan (Assam) & Divya Wadhwa (Miss Teen International India 2025)

JAIPUR REVERBERATES WITH 'JAI JAGANNATH'

SANTOSH SHARMA & SUNIL SHARMA

SACRED BEGINNING! Governor Haribhau Bagade, accompanied by Deputy CM Diya Kumari, offered prayers to Lord Jagannath before ceremonially flagging off the grand Jagannath Rath Yatra from the Govind Dev Ji Temple on Thursday. Prior to the commencement of the procession, Guv Bagade performed the traditional Chhera Pahanra ritual and formally pulled the chariot, marking the auspicious beginning of the yatra, while Dy CM Diya Kumari joined the religious ceremonies and inauguration.

Grand Rath Yatra by Shri Jagannath Seva Samiti

'Jai Jagannath' echoes during Gupt Vrindavan Dham's Rath Yatra

Sacred Rath Yatra by Shri Jagannath Dham-Kashi Adhyatmik Kendra

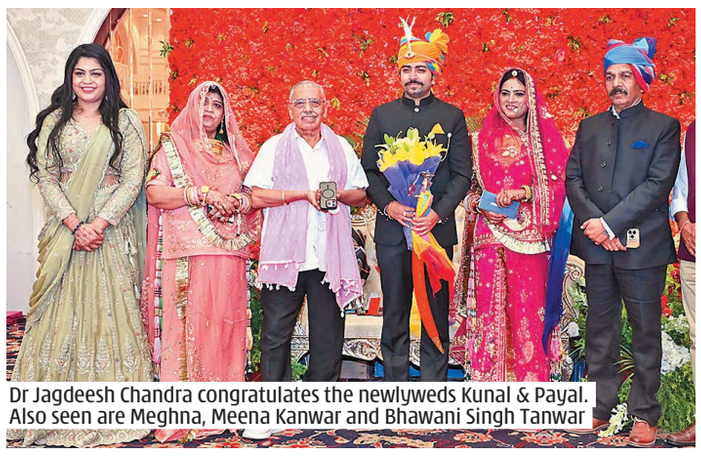
City First
cityfirst@firstindia.co.in

The Pink City reverberated with chants of 'Jai Jagannath' as thousands of devotees participated in grand Jagannath Rath Yatras organised by Gupt Vrindavan Dham, Shri Jagannath Dham–Kashi Adhyatmik Kendra, Shri Jagannath Seva Samiti (Dola Foundation & Social Welfare Trust) and several other organisations on Thursday. Devotees from across Jaipur gathered to seek the blessings of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra, enthusiastically pulling the beautifully adorned chariots through the city. The processions passed through prominent routes, including Sodala Chouraha, Shri Govind Dev Ji Temple, Collectorate Circle, Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple, Vaishali Nagar, and culminated at the symbolic Gundicha Temple at Concept Life Allied Health Hospital. The procession organised by Shri Jagannath Dham–Kashi Adhyatmik Kendra, coordinated by Dr Shailendra Katara, received a grand welcome from the Sodala Vyapar Mandal and various social organisations along the route. Amitasana Das, President of Gupt Vrindavan Dham, said that according to Hindu scriptures, pulling Lord Jagannath's chariot is considered a sacred act that leads to spiritual liberation. The organisers also reaffirmed their commitment to preserving and promoting Sanatan traditions, while strengthening faith, social harmony and India's rich cultural heritage.

Young performers enthralled the gathering with spirited cultural presentations

A devotee blows the ceremonial conch shell, adding spiritual fervour to the grand Jagannath Rath Yatra procession

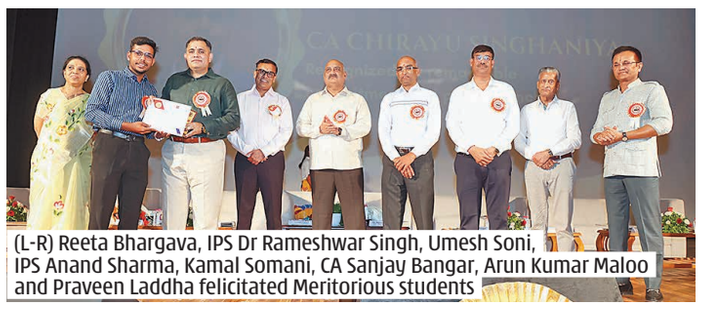
A GRAND UNION



Dr Jagdeesh Chandra congratulates the newlyweds Kunal & Payal. Also seen are Meghna, Meena Kanwar and Bhawani Singh Tanwar

Amid grandeur and heartfelt celebrations, Kunal, son of Meena Kanwar and Bhawani Singh Tanwar, tied the knot with Payal, daughter of Malti Kanwar and Mukesh Singh, at Maharaja Banquet in C-Scheme, on Wednesday evening. Dr Jagdeesh Chandra graced the ceremony and blessed the newlyweds, further conveying his warm wishes to both families on the joyous occasion. The celebration brought together family members, relatives and friends, who showered their blessings on the couple and wished them a lifetime of happiness, love and prosperity. NAIM KHAN

MPS MARKS 49TH FOUNDATION DAY



(L-R) Reeta Bhargava, IPS Dr Rameshwar Singh, Umesh Soni, IPS Anand Sharma, Kamal Somani, CA Sanjay Bangar, Arun Kumar Maloo and Praveen Laddha felicitated Meritorious students

Maheshwari Public School (MPS), Jawahar Nagar, celebrated its 49th Foundation Day with a grand two-day programme, heralding the institution's Golden Jubilee year on Thursday. The inaugural ceremony was attended by eminent businessmen and social workers Ashok Bagla and Kishore Kumar Malpani as Chief Guests. They were joined by ECMS Chairman Umesh Soni, Vice Chairman Nirmal Dargar, General Secretary (Education) Kamal Somani, Treasurer Arun Kumar Maloo, Secretary CA Sanjay Bangar, Building Secretary Praveen Laddha and Principal Reeta Bhargava. A nostalgic highlight was the presentation of heartfelt video messages from distinguished alumni, whose inspiring journeys and cherished memories rekindled pride and motivated students to uphold the school's glorious legacy. On the second day, IPS Dr Rameshwar Singh and IPS Anand Sharma graced the celebrations as Chief Guests. CA Sanjay Bangar announced the launch of the RISE Olympiad, offering scholarships of up to ₹2 lakh. Alumni video messages, Excellence Awards and live streaming were added to the celebrations, which concluded with a vote of thanks by Reeta Bhargava.

PRCI MARKS WORLD PR DAY

NAIM KHAN

The PRCI Jaipur Chapter celebrated World Public Relations Day 2026 with a panel discussion on "Influencer Relations vs Traditional Media Relations: Credibility, Reach and the Future of PR." Somendra Harsh, Chairman, highlighted the importance of innovation with credibility on Thursday. The discussion, moderated by Misha Sharma, featured Jagdeep Singh (Jags), RJ Ravindra and Marcela Baur. Sunny Kulshreshtha, Secretary, coordinated the programme, which also included the induction of new PRCI members. Communication professionals, media representatives, academicians and students attended the event.

—MORE IN CITY FIRST TOMORROW

Guru Pt Kundan Lal Gangani's timeless legacy celebrated through a grand centenary festival

Remembering a Maestro

City First
cityfirst@firstindia.co.in

The Guru Pt Kundan Lal Gangani Janma Shatabdi Samaroh, commemorating the birth centenary of legendary Kathak maestro Guru Pt. Kundan Lal Gangani, concluded on a grand note at Jawahar Kala Kendra (JKK), Jaipur, on Thursday. Organised by the Guru Kundan Lal Gangani Foundation in collaboration with Jawahar Kala Kendra, the three-day festival paid tribute to the seventh-generation torchbearer of the Jaipur Gharana, born on July 16, 1926, whose innovations in choreography, rhythmic compositions and Kathak technique transformed the classical dance form.

Founded by his son, eminent Kathak exponent Pt Rajendra Gangani, the foundation continues to preserve the guru's legacy through workshops, lecture-demonstrations, masterclasses and training programmes across the country.

MUKESH KIRADOO & SUNIL SHARMA

Students of the Guru Kundan Lal Gangani Foundation present a graceful Guru Vandana during the event

The festival began with performances celebrating the shared legacy of the Jaipur and Lucknow gharanas, while the second day presented a rare confluence of the Raigarh and Jaipur gharanas. A major highlight was Dr Chetana Jyotishi's acclaimed presentation of Kabir Vani, blending Kathak with Sant Kabir's spiritual philosophy.

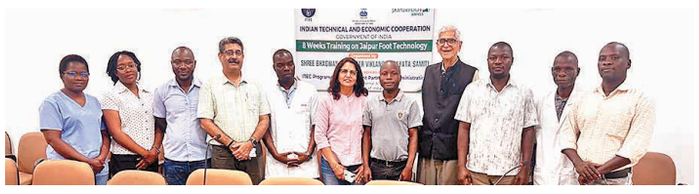
Students of the foundation offered a Guru Vandana, followed by a mesmerising recital by Pt Rajendra Gangani. The grand finale featured acclaimed artistes Pt Ram Mohan Maharaj, Guru Prerana Shrimali, Guru Shobha Koser, Dr Chetana Jyotishi, Guru Pt Charan Girdhar Chand, Guru Dr Shashi Sankhla, Sushri Manisha Gulyani and Sanjeet Gangani, reaffirming India's rich Kathak heritage and the timeless guru-shishya tradition.

Pt Rajendra Gangani enthrals the audience with a captivating Kathak performance

Guru Prerana Shrimali presents a graceful Kathak recital

—More in City First tomorrow

PROSTHETIC TRAINING BY BMVSS



An eight-member delegation from Malawi, including two women, has arrived in Jaipur for an eight-week intensive training programme in Jaipur Foot prosthetic fabrication at the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS) under the Ministry of External Affairs. The delegation was welcomed by Dr DR Mehta, Dr Deepak Mehta and Dr Pooja Mugul. Dr DR Mehta said BMVSS has trained professionals in nearly 50 countries and benefited around 40,000 people globally. The programme aims to strengthen prosthetic rehabilitation services in Malawi through advanced technical training and quality standards.

MILITARY LEADS GREEN DRIVE

Jaipur Military Station concluded its Van Mahotsav 2026 Green Drive (July 1-14) by planting 42,000 saplings across the cantonment with support from military units, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Army Public School (APS), RWAs and NGOs. NCC cadets, APS and Kendriya Vidyalaya No 2 organised awareness programmes, while experts from the Rajasthan Forest Department conducted workshops. Riyasat Foundation, Aadhar Shodh Sansthan and Countree Foundation contributed 5,000, 25,000 and 12,000 saplings, respectively, with Miyawaki plantation.

ACADEMIC MILESTONE ACHIEVED!

Durgesh Doraya, son of Anil Doraya, was declared eligible for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Management by Apex University, Jaipur, after the University accepted the report of the external examiner for his doctoral thesis. His research, titled "Problems and Prospects of Jaipur Blue Pottery Industry," was conducted under the supervision of Dr Garima Mishra. The notification was issued by the Office of the Dean Research following the successful completion of his PhD. viva-voce examination held on Thursday. Prof Rajesh Singhal, Dean Research, stated that the degree would be formally conferred during the University's convocation ceremony.

MONSOON MUSE

The Young Authors Club of India organised "Rimjhim Baarish Ke Bahaane", an open mic session under its "Shabdon Ka Taana Baana" series at Ateet Raag, a museum studio in Jaipur. Held amid the monsoon, the event featured poetry recitations and storytelling by over 15 young participants, including Jitendra Saraswat, Alpana Agarwal, Isha Jain, Vipin Kumar, Kabir, Shivani, Rakshita Singh and Animesh. Satyajeet Talukdar, CEO of the Young Authors Club of India, said the initiative aims to connect people with literature and encourage young talent. The programme was coordinated by Divya, hosted by Rahul Chand, while Vinay Sharma, Director of Ateet Raag, welcomed guests and introduced the studio's unique heritage.