

Kewal Dhillon assumes charge as Punjab BJP chief, vows governance based on Maharaja Ranjit's rule

CHANDIGARH: Newly appointed Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon formally took charge on Wednesday, with party leaders saying they aim to provide governance in Punjab inspired by Sikh emperor Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule where everyone was treated equally. Dhillon, a Jat Sikh face, took the charge at the party headquarters here amid 'ardas' (Sikh prayer) and 'puja' rituals. A portrait of the 19th century Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh was also unveiled in the party office. Describing it as a historic day, 76-year-old Dhillon said Shere-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule was known for fairness and equal treatment and the BJP would work towards establishing a governance model inspired by his regime. His appointment came ahead of the assembly elections due early next year. Dhillon, the first ever Jat Sikh president of state unit, assumed the charge in the presence of Haryana Chief



Minister Nayab Singh Saini, BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, national secretary Narinder Singh Raina, Union minister Ravneet Singh Bittu, Punjab BJP working president Ashwani Sharma, former union minister Preneet Kaur and senior party leader Iqbal Singh Lalpura. Later addressing a gathering of party workers and leaders at Law Bhawan, Dhillon thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president Nitin Nabin for giving the responsibility. Emphasising on the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas',

he said, "We will walk together." He also thanked his predecessors, including Sunil Jakhar and Ashwani Sharma, for laying the strong foundation of the party in Punjab. Targeting the AAP-led Punjab government, Dhillon said the party led by Arvind Kejriwal had promised a fake 'badlav' (change) in the state. He said women were betrayed by the AAP government as he lashed out at it over its poll promise of Rs 1,000 per month of financial assistance. He said each section is feeling cheated under the Bhagwant Mann government. Dhillon also slammed the

government over the issue of drug menace in the state. Referring to the recent elections of municipal bodies, he said these polls were "looted" as he alleged misuse of official machinery by the AAP government. Emphasising the farming sector, Dhillon spoke about minimum support prices being given on all crops in the BJP-ruled Haryana state. While laying emphasis on crop diversification, he recalled that he had set up PepsiCo in Punjab during the militancy days. People are fed up with the AAP government, the new Punjab BJP chief said, adding that "we will bring a 'badlav' in Punjab". Earlier speaking on this occasion, BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh also said the BJP will establish a regime in Punjab inspired by Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule. "Khalis soch' (pure thinking), thinking of taking Punjab forward, thinking of treating everyone equally, thinking of protecting the poor, elimination of corruption, gangsters," Chugh said.

ECI hosts Conference on Media and Elections, Focuses on Deepfakes, misinformation and digital campaigning

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission of India on Wednesday inaugurated a two-day international conference on "Global Best Practices and Innovations for Media in Electoral Processes and Campaigns" in New Delhi, bringing together election administrators, academics, researchers and electoral experts to deliberate on emerging challenges and opportunities in the rapidly evolving media landscape. The conference, being held on June 3 and 4 at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), is aimed at developing global knowledge resources on election management and media engagement, with a particular focus on addressing contemporary challenges posed by digital technologies and information ecosystems. Delivering the keynote address, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar highlighted the Election Commission's efforts to maintain close engagement with India's vast electorate through extensive training and outreach programmes. "The Election Commission of India undertakes training of grassroots field functionaries including BLOs and BLAs to ensure a seamless connect with over 100 crore electors," Kumar said.



He noted that public confidence in the electoral process was reflected in voter participation levels and pointed to the strong turnout witnessed in the recently concluded Assembly elections. "The trust of electors in the electoral process was reflected in their highest-ever participation in the recently held General Elections to the State Legislative Assemblies," he added. According to the Election Commission, more than 480 participants, including District Election Officers (DEOs), Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), thematic experts, academics, research scholars and members of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs), are attending the conference. The event seeks to document inter-

national experiences, model standards and best practices in election management from across the world. The discussions are expected to contribute to a thematic report envisioned under the Delhi Declaration adopted on January 23, 2026, during the India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management. A major focus of the conference is the growing impact of technology on electoral communication and public discourse. Sessions will examine issues such as misinformation and disinformation, the spread of AI-generated deepfakes and synthetic media, non-transparent digital political advertising, and questions surrounding platform governance and accountability.

Suspended CISF constable held in Hyderabad with 158 kgs of ganja

HYDERABAD: A suspended CISF constable was apprehended here after he was allegedly found in illegal possession of dry ganja, a narcotic substance, police said on Wednesday. The sleuths of Commissioner's Task Force caught the 39-year-old accused in SR Nagar on June 2 and seized 158 kgs of dry ganja, one car and three mobile phones, all worth Rs 79 lakh, DCP (Commissioner's Task Force) Gaikwad Vaibhav Raghunath said in a release. The accused, a native of Andhra Pradesh, and

presently residing in Kerala, was recruited as a constable in the Central Industrial Security Force in 2009 and later on deputation went to the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), police said. Burdened by debts, he turned to smuggling ganja on commission basis. He allegedly procured large quantities of ganja from cultivators and supplied the contraband to interstate peddlers operating in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra states, the

DCP said. He procured ganja from a cultivator from Odisha. While smuggling ganja, he "misused" his official position as a CISF constable, police said. Whenever his vehicle was intercepted at police check posts, he allegedly displayed his CISF identity card to evade inspection and avoid detection by law enforcement authorities, police said. The accused was previously arrested in 2025 in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, in connection with a case registered un-

der the NDPS Act. Following his arrest, he was lodged in Khammam jail and subsequently suspended from service. After his release from jail, he did not mend his ways and again started smuggling ganja. Despite facing criminal proceedings and suspension from his job, the accused allegedly continued his involvement in illicit drug trafficking after being released from jail, the release added. A case was registered and further investigation is in progress.

Five held for impersonating police

HYDERABAD: Five members of a gang who were allegedly involved in kidnapping, extortion and cheating after impersonating police were arrested here, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on May 18 in Jagadgirigutta, when a 42-year-old man, while proceeding on his motorcycle was intercepted by the accused. Three persons alighted from the vehicle while one remained inside. The accused falsely represented themselves as police officials and informed the man that a criminal case was registered against him in Haryana and that he was

required to accompany them for enquiry, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Quthbullapur Zone) N Koti Reddy said in a release. The man was forcibly taken into the vehicle, wrongfully confined, and his mobile phone, ATM card, and cash were seized. He was coerced into revealing banking credentials and passwords. To strengthen the deception, the accused arranged a fake video call impersonating a police officer from Haryana. The victim, was taken to Suryapet, where Rs One lakh was withdrawn from his bank account through ATM transactions. Further, Rs One lakh was

transferred through a digital payment app and additional money was siphoned through online banking applications. In total, an amount of Rs 5.26 lakh was fraudulently extorted from the victim. Later, the accused assaulted him, removed his SIM card, provided a basic mobile handset, and abandoned him at an isolated place before fleeing, police said. The man lodged a complaint with police on May 20. Based on technical evidence and sustained investigation, five accused persons, who belong to Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Hyderabad were apprehended.

During interrogation, the accused revealed that they were acquainted in prison and continued their criminal activities as an organised gang after release. On the modus operandi of the accused, police said the gang targeted businessmen and financially strong individuals. They used fake police uniforms, identity cards, rank badges, and insignia to impersonate police officers. Victims were intercepted, falsely informed about criminal cases, forcibly confined, and coerced into transferring money through ATM withdrawals, online banking, and digital payment platforms, police said.

Skeleton recovered from abandoned house in Ganjam

BERHAMPUR: A human skeleton was found in an abandoned building in Odisha's Ganjam district on Wednesday, police said. The skeletal remains were found in an unused house in the premises of the defunct Aska Spinning Mill and have been sent to the forensic department of MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur for DNA profiling, Kotinada police station inspector-in-charge Damodar Bihari said. It is suspected that the skeleton could be that of 24-year-old grocery shop owner A Shankar Patra of Narsinghpur, who has been missing for nearly one-and-a-half years. "We can confirm whether the skeleton belongs

to the missing person only after receiving the DNA report," Bihari said. Patra went missing on November 29, 2024. His family lodged a missing person report at Kotinada police station on December 1 after failing to trace him despite extensive searches. Family members claimed they identified the remains based on clothing and footwear found near the spot. Police said they were alerted after information emerged about skeletal remains lying inside an abandoned structure of the defunct spinning mill. Patra's mother subsequently visited the site and claimed the remains were those of her son. The missing man's fam-

ily has alleged foul play, claiming that some of Patra's acquaintances may have been involved in his disappearance. "He had gone out after receiving calls from some of his friends, but never returned home. His mobile phone was switched off thereafter, and the explanations given by those who contacted him were not satisfactory," his father, A Laxman Patra, alleged. The family suspects Patra was killed and his body dumped in the abandoned building. Police, however, said no formal murder complaint had been lodged earlier. "We have now registered an unnatural death case and started an investigation," Bihari said.

DA case registered against suspended police official, Rs 5.92 cr assets found during searches

HYDERABAD: The ACB on Wednesday said it registered a case of Disproportionate Assets against a suspended police official and found assets worth over Rs 5.92 crore during searches conducted at his residence and places belonging to his relatives and other associates. The accused was arrested and is being produced before a court here for judicial remand, ACB sources said. The case was registered against Additional Superintendent of Police N Bhujanga Rao, now under suspension, who is one of the accused in the case related to alleged "phone tapping" during the previous BRS regime. The suspended police official allegedly acquired assets disproportionate to his known sources of income by indulging in "corrupt prac-



tices and dubious means" during his service, the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) said in a release. As the offence is punishable under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018), searches were conducted on Wednesday at Bhujanga Rao's residence and 15 other places belonging to his relatives, "benamidars" and other associates, the ACB said. During the searches, docu-

ments relating to 27.9 acres of agricultural land, five open plots, two houses, and one commercial building were found. Further during the searches, net cash of Rs 3.83 lakh, bank balances amounting to Rs 8 lakh, and gold ornaments weighing about one kg, were found in addition to two cars. The total value of the assets detected is Rs 5,92,54,500 while the market value of the immovable properties may be many times higher than the document value. The ACB further said during the search at Bhujanga Rao's residence, 29 liquor bottles were also noticed and in this regard intimation was given to Excise officials for necessary action. Further verification of additional assets is underway. The case is under investigation, the ACB added.

Woman beaten to death by neighbour over land dispute

JAIPUR: A 50-year-old woman was beaten to death allegedly by his neighbour over a land dispute in Odisha's Jajpur district on Wednesday, the police said. The incident took place at Saroi village under the Dharmasala police station limits. The deceased was identified as Nandini Dehury, a widow, while the accused is Hari Dehury (30). According to the police, the families of Nandini and Hari had a dispute over a piece of homestead land for a long time. Around 11 am on Wednesday, Hari forcibly entered Nandini's house and got into a quarrel with her over the land dispute. During the heated argument, Hari allegedly attacked Nandini with a crowbar, leading to her death, the police said. On being informed, the police reached the spot and arrested Hari based on a complaint filed by the son of the deceased, Jajpur Road Sub Divisional Police Officer S K Patra said. "We have sent the body for post-mortem and are investigating the motive behind the murder," he said, adding that a property dispute is suspected as the motive behind the murder," Patra said.

Army take Serious View of Officer's Marriage Proposal at Nashik Passing Out Parade

NEW DELHI: What began as a heartwarming moment that won applause on the parade ground and admiration on social media has now attracted the displeasure of the Indian Army's senior leadership, with a newly commissioned officer's marriage proposal at the conclusion of the Combat Army Aviation Training School's (CAATS) Passing Out Parade in Nashik being viewed as a breach of established military norms and directives. On Tuesday, Captain Bharat Bhardwaj surprised his partner, Arushi, with a marriage proposal in front of fellow officers, instructors, family members and guests. Still dressed in his ceremonial uniform after successfully completing his aviation training, the young officer knelt before his partner and asked her to marry him. Overwhelmed with emotion, she embraced him as applause erupted from the gathered crowd.



Videos of the proposal quickly spread across social media platforms, drawing thousands of reactions from users. Speaking to the media, Captain Bhardwaj, said that the proposal was carefully planned to coincide with the POP. "We have all become pilots, instructors today. It was a big day for all of us. Our hard work yielded fruit today. I don't think that there is any better day than this to propose marriage to her. I wanted to make this day memorable for my fiancée

too. That was the whole idea," he said. Speaking to UNI, sources in the Indian Army said the episode was met with strong disapproval at senior levels. According to the sources, the act constituted a violation of the Defence Technical Publicity Rules (DTPR), 2004, as well as internal protocols and directives governing military ceremonies and conduct. "The Passing Out Parade is a formal military occasion that marks a significant professional milestone. It is

not a platform for personal displays or private celebrations," a source said. Sources further emphasised that personal moments should remain private and should not overshadow ceremonies where officers are formally commissioned and entrusted with responsibilities in service to the nation. "Such occasions carry immense dignity and symbolism. Every institution and ceremony has its own sanctity, which must be preserved and respected with the utmost seriousness," the source added. The CAATS POP marked the successful completion of training for officers from helicopter, pilot-observer, instructor and remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) courses. A total of 59 officers graduated during the ceremony, while 25 officers earned their coveted Flying Wings after completing Basic Flying Training.

BJP chief Nitin Nabin mourns loss of lives in Delhi fire tragedy

NEW DELHI: BJP president Nitin Nabin on Wednesday expressed grief over the loss of lives in a fire incident in Delhi's Malviya Nagar area, and wished for the speedy recovery of the injured. The devastating blaze tore through a bed and breakfast hotel operating without a fire NOC in a congested bylane in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar area on Wednesday, killing at least 21 people, including 11 foreigners whose relatives were being treated in hospitals nearby. The fire at the Flourish Stay B&B in Hauz Rani started around 8.30 am and quickly spread through the five-floor narrow building that had only one entry-exit point, permanently sealed windows and a sensor-operated main

door, officials said. "The loss of lives due to the fire in Malviya Nagar, Delhi, is extremely tragic and heart-rending. May God grant a place to the departed souls at His sacred feet and bestow strength upon the bereaved families to endure this immense sorrow. I pray for the swift recovery of all those who have been injured," Nabin said in a post on X. At least 58 people were rescued from the hotel and rushed to hospitals, where 21 were declared dead, including 10 Indians, nine African nationals, and two from Turkmenistan, officials said. The death toll in the fire — among the worst in the city in recent years — could rise with several of the injured in a critical condition, they said.

Unidentified miscreants 'hack' tribal couple to death in Jharkhand's Giridih

GIRIDIH: A tribal couple was allegedly hacked to death at their home by unidentified miscreants in Jharkhand's Giridih district, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place late Tuesday night at Tiriltanr Tola, located near Dalan Chakari village. The deceased couple has been identified as Parni Marandi (35), and her husband Patiya Hansda (40), they said. "The victims were attacked with sharp-edged weapon by unidentified miscreants while they were asleep in the courtyard of their home along with their youngest son, who is one and a half years old. At that time, their 10-year-old son slept some distance away, and their 11-year-old daughter was sleeping on the terrace, who alerted neighbours," said Dumri SDPO Abid Khan. As information was received, the police reached the scene. Hansda died on the spot, while his injured wife was rushed to Sadar Hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries during treatment, he said. Prima facie, it seems that the couple was hacked to death over some dispute. So far, no one has been arrested. Police have initiated a detailed investigation into the matter, the SDPO said. The bodies of the victims were handed over to the bereaved family members, and an FIR will be lodged in this regard, the officer said.