

# Will talk about establishing Himachal Scouts Battalion during Delhi visit: Sukhu

**SHIMLA:** Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu on Tuesday said he would raise the matter of establishing a Himachal Scouts Battalion with the Central government during his upcoming Delhi visit. The specialised force composed predominantly of local youths accustomed to the terrain, will significantly enhance the operational readiness along the state's border areas, he said. The setting up of an airport at Rangreek in Spiti valley to promote tourism would also be taken up, Sukhu said. Presiding over a high-level meeting with officers of Army and Border Roads



Organisation (BRO) here, the chief minister directed that the border development projects be expedited to extend maximum benefits to military forces as well as people residing along the frontiers, said an official statement. Assuring full government

support to BRO in executing the various road projects in the state, Sukhu said the Nithalbach-Harshil road work in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand shall be declared a strategically important project. He instructed BRO to expedite work on the San-

sari-Killar-Thirot-Tandi road so that people in the area are provided better connectivity. He said 35 per cent of the work has been completed and BRO should speed it up. Highlighting that the government is promoting nat-

ural farming in the state, the chief minister also asked the Army officers to purchase natural farming products such as barley, wheat and maize from the Himachal Pradesh Marketing Board besides milk. General Officer Commanding (Uttar Bharat Area) Lt Gen G D Mishra apprised the chief minister that Army will establish an apple processing plant in this area and organise a medical camp for cataract surgery in June this year. Sukhu will inaugurate border tourism activities from Shipki-La in Kinnaur district on June 10, besides flagging off the Sadbhawana Cycle rally on the occasion, the statement said.

# Indian Armed Forces begin combat exercise in Assam forest

Press Trust of India

**DILRUGARH:** The Indian Armed Forces on Tuesday started a multi-dimensional combat exercise, which will continue till August, at Dulung reserve forest in Lakhimpur district of Assam, officials said. The Dulung Mukh range of the forest near the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border has been activated for bombing, rocket launching and shooting exercises of the Indian Army from May 20 to August 31, according to a senior official. The exercise will include testing of different explosive prowess and aerial firepower, he added. "This marks the first instance of full-spectrum rocket and aerial bombardment



exercises at Dulung. The expansion in military activity in this area near China signifies a bolstered security posture in the strategically sensitive Northeastern frontier," the official said. The district administration and the Forest Department have prohibited people from entering the forest during this period.

"We have issued the directive to the local people to avoid any untoward incident and to prevent injury or damage to life and property," a district official said. Dulung Mukh is the practice range used by the Indian Air Force for aerial drills, originating from the Tezpur air base in neighbouring Sonitpur district of Assam.

# Chhattisgarh EOW raids 39 places in state in 'liquor scam', recovers Rs 90 lakh in cash

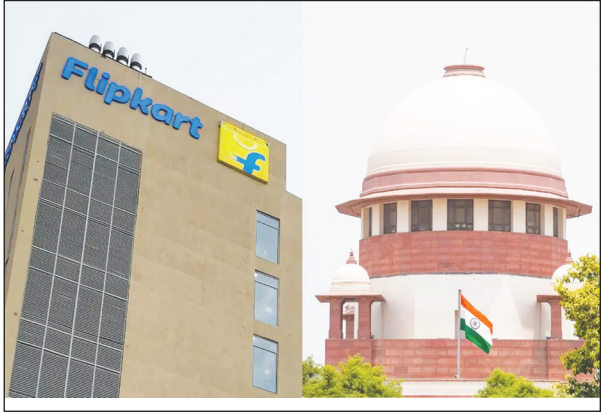
**RAIPUR:** Chhattisgarh police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) on Tuesday conducted simultaneous raids at 39 locations across the state in connection with the ongoing investigation into the multi-crore 'liquor scam' and recovered more than Rs 90 lakh in cash, officials said. During raids at residences, business establishments and other premises of the suspects in different districts, important documents, digital data, mobile phones, electronic equipment, gold-silver, records related to investments in immovable properties and cash worth more than Rs 90 lakh were recovered, an EOW official said. The districts where the raids were conducted included Durg, Dhamtari and Mahasamund. The action was taken based

on investigation suggesting that prime suspects in the case had invested ill-gotten money on a large scale in various businesses and properties through different persons, he said. Analysis of the recovered materials and further legal action were underway, the official said. Notably, on May 17, the EOW had conducted raids at 13 locations across the state linked to people associated with Congress MLA and former state excise minister Kawasi Lakhma, who was arrested earlier this year in the alleged liquor scam. Lakhma is lodged in Raipur Central Jail following his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in January in connection with the alleged scam. Lakhma, 71, is a six-time MLA from Konta (Sukma district) and served

as the excise minister in the previous Congress government (2018-23). According to EOW officials, 70 persons, including several Congress leaders, and companies have been named in the FIR lodged by it last year into the alleged liquor scam based on a report of the ED which has been probing the money laundering angle in the case. The alleged liquor scam, as per the ED, was orchestrated between 2019-22 when Chhattisgarh was ruled by the Bhupesh Baghel-led Congress government. The Chhattisgarh liquor scam resulted in a massive loss to the state exchequer and filled the pockets of beneficiaries of the liquor syndicate with the illegal proceeds of crime pegged at more than Rs 2,100 crore, the central agency had claimed earlier.

# SC says Flipkart known for creating monopolies, appoints amicus

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday said e-commerce major Flipkart was known for creating monopolies and expressed concern over the fate of smaller players in the market. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh appointed an amicus curiae to assist it in the adjudication of the dispute arising out of an National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order asking the fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) to initiate probe against Flipkart for an alleged use of its dominant position. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was surprised that the complainant All India Online Vendors Association (AIOVA) which alleged unfair trade practices by Flpkart was nowhere to be found as its lawyers had no instructions from the body.



Advocate Udayaditya Banerjee, appearing for AIOVA, said it was possible that the organisation was disbanded or no longer existed," the bench observed. The counsel for Flipkart said due to the platform, many small vendors were able to take their businesses to the national level. Justice Kant said sometimes Flipkart offered so much discount that it dis-

rupted the business of small players and the balance of the market. It asked Banerjee to assist the court in the matter saying otherwise it would be an uneven fight. The bench said it did not matter whether the complainant AIOVA was before it or not as it would like to examine the issue in detail. The bench was also critical of CCI being represented through lawyers and asked why a quasi judicial body was being represented in the case. "It has passed the order, good or bad. It's (CCI) job is over. Why should the authority be here in a case? Tomorrow, we can't ask the high court to be here in every case," Justice Kant said. The top court was informed that due to an order of the apex court, the CCI was represented in every case. The bench posted the matter in August.

mouth...it is a serious issue and we have to keep the interest of consumers and small players in mind. Some balancing authority is needed," the bench observed. The counsel for Flipkart said due to the platform, many small vendors were able to take their businesses to the national level. Justice Kant said sometimes Flipkart offered so much discount that it dis-

Flipkart challenged the March 4, 2020 order of the NCLAT asking the CCI to initiate the investigation against Flipkart for an alleged use of its dominant position. The appellate tribunal set aside the an order passed by the CCI which absolved Flipkart of unfair practices using its dominant position. The appellate tribunal directed the CCI to ask its probe arm director general to investigate the allegations. In November 2018, the AIOVA approached the CCI alleging abuse of market dominance by the e-commerce major. AIOVA alleged abuse of market dominance against Flipkart India Pvt Ltd, which is into wholesale trading/distribution of books, mobiles, computers and related accessories, and e-commerce marketplace Flipkart Internet Pvt Ltd.

# Ranya Rao gets default bail in gold smuggling case

**BENGALURU:** Kannada film actress Ranya Rao and co-accused Tarun Kondaru Raju were granted bail on Tuesday by a Special Court for Economic Offences here in connection with the gold smuggling case. The court approved their default bail applications after the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) failed to file a charge sheet within the stipulated period. Presiding Judge Vishwanath C Gowdar allowed the bail on the condition that each accused executed a bond of Rs two lakh and furnish two sureties. Additional conditions include a ban on leaving the country without court permission, full cooperation with the investigation, and a directive not to repeat the alleged offence. Despite securing bail in the smuggling case, Ranya Rao will continue to remain behind bars. Authorities have filed a separate case against her under the stringent Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities



Act, 1974 (COFEPOSA), a preventive detention law designed to tackle smuggling and preserve foreign exchange reserves. Under COFEPOSA, individuals can be held without trial for up to a year based on suspicion of involvement in such activities. Rao was arrested on March 3 at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru after arriving from Dubai. Acting on a tip-off, DRI officials detained her and recovered 14.2 kg of gold bars valued at over Rs 12.56 crore from her. The investigation is ongoing, and Rao's release will now depend on the outcome of legal proceedings under COFEPOSA.

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# Rare Indian Grey wolf sighting reported along Yamuna floodplains in Delhi

**NEW DELHI:** A lone Indian grey wolf was recently spotted along the Yamuna floodplains near Palla, where the river enters Delhi, in a rare wildlife sighting in the city's northern fringes. Last week, on Thursday morning, the sighting was made by Hemant Garg, a 41-year-old businessman and wildlife enthusiast who frequently tracks nocturnal wildlife across Delhi-NCR. Garg said he noticed the animal around 7.45 am, walking along the riverbank with a distinct gait and having dark grey fur that didn't match a typical dog's. "It had a dull, dark grey coat and walked with a certain grace, unlike a stray dog. When I got closer and started taking photos, it quickly vanished into the tall grasses," said Garg. Photographs taken by Garg

were soon shared with wildlife experts, several of whom noted striking similarities to the Indian grey wolf — a species not officially recorded in Delhi for decades. Many experts have confirmed that the animal is an Indian grey wolf, though it is considered special since it was spotted in the landscape of Delhi, a rare occurrence. However, they noted that unusual events do happen in nature. A wolf expert and wildlife researcher said the animal did look like a wolf but cautioned against jumping to conclusions. The dark colour and tail curvature suggest the possibility of hybridisation with feral dogs. Without genetic testing, one can't be sure, he said. He added that it is possible

the wolf may have travelled from Uttar Pradesh or Rajasthan along riverbanks. "From the side profile, it certainly appears to be a wolf. A dog typically does not have such a jawline, strong chest, or grey-black, dusky-dull coat. Given its location near the Yamuna, it might have followed the river corridor," he explained. Meanwhile, according to a 2014 publication by forester G.N. Sinha, there has been no confirmed sighting of a wolf in the capital since the 1940s. The Indian grey wolf is native to grasslands, scrublands and dry deciduous forests, and their territory often overlaps with agro-pastoral landscapes, occasionally preying on livestock. Experts say that colour variations and fur texture can

differ based on age, habitat and dominance within a pack. While the sighting remains unverified, it has reignited conversations around urban biodiversity and habitat conservation. "This is both thrilling and important. It shows the resilience of wildlife even in heavily urbanised areas like Delhi and reminds us to protect the remaining green corridors," said Abhishek Gulshan, naturalist and founder of NINOX – Owl About Nature. He also confirmed it was an Indian grey wolf, adding, "New things do happen, and animals do travel." However, a senior forest department official downplayed the sighting, saying, "We have no record of any wolf sighting in recent times."

# Jaishankar remarks row: BJP, Cong attack each other with 'Mir Jafar', Jaichand' barbs

**NEW DELHI:** The war of words between Congress and BJP over their leaders' statements on the Indo-Pak conflict intensified on Tuesday, with the ruling party calling Rahul Gandhi "modern age Mir Jafar" and the opposition party describing External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar as "new age Jaichand". The two parties traded verbal barbs over their remarks on Operation Sindoor and also posted memes on social media, each suggesting that the other has betrayed the nation. The Congress and Rahul Gandhi had attacked Jaishankar, alleging he had forewarned Pakistan about Operation Sindoor, and questioned how many planes India lost and how many terrorists escaped from their camps in Pakistan due to his "warning". After Gandhi's attack, the BJP's Amit Malviya put up memes on X -- one showing half of the Congress leader's face blended with that of Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir and the caption "one agenda". "What's next for Rahul Gandhi? The Nishan-e-Pakistan?" Malviya asked in the post while accusing the Congress leader of echoing Pakistan's narrative. The post left the Congress fuming and the opposition party warned of legal action. "Rahul Gandhi is the new age Mir Jafar," Malviya, the BJP's IT department head, wrote on X, posting another

meme showing the Congress leader asking Indian Army from behind a wall, "How many aircraft we lost", while standing on the back of Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif who prods him to "ask loudly". "It is not surprising that Rahul Gandhi is speaking the language of Pakistan and its benefactors. He hasn't congratulated the Prime Minister on the flawless Operation Sindoor, which unmistakably showcases India's dominance. "Instead, he repeatedly asks 'how many jets we lost' - a question that has already been addressed in the DGMO briefings. Curiously, he hasn't once inquired about how many Pakistani jets were shot down during the conflict, or how many were destroyed while parked in their hangars when Indian forces pounded Pakistani air bases," Malviya said in his post. The Congress hit back with party leader Pawan Khera posting a meme apparently showing Jaishankar making a call to Pakistan with Prime Minister Modi by his side. "Jaishankar is the new age Jaichand?" Khera said in a post while sharing the image in which minister says, "Stay Safe Janab", while Modi asks him to "speak loudly". It is said Mir Jafar, who served as a commander in the Bengal army under Siraj ud-Daulah, had betrayed him during the Battle of Plassey, paving the



way for British rule in India. Jaichand, a Rajput king, is known to have supported Muslim invader Muhammad Ghori against another Rajput ruler Prithviraj Chauhan. Khera said at a time when the nation stood united in grief and solidarity and its borders are facing heightened security tensions, the ruling BJP "behaves with shocking immaturity and reckless abandon". "Instead of showing accountability and statesmanship, they retreat behind empty bravado and diversionary tactics," he alleged. "We, as a responsible opposition, have always stood firmly with our armed forces without any compromise, but we cannot and will not remain silent when

the government fails the very people it is sworn to protect," Khera said, posing several questions. "Why did the BJP government rush to inform Pakistan about the operation before even alerting our civilians in border areas like Poonch? Did terrorists like Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed and the terrorists responsible for Pahalgaon escape because of these premature disclosures? "Who is accountable for that? Based on the information shared by the External Affairs Minister with Pakistan, how many terrorists managed to escape? And how much damage did it cause to India's security and national interests?" he said. The Ministry of External Affairs has refuted claims that Jaishankar had acknowledged that India alerted Pakistan before the launch of Operation Sindoor on May 7, describing the reports as an "utter misrepresentation". "The external affairs minister had stated that we had warned Pakistan at the start, which is clearly the early phase after Operation Sindoor's commencement," the external publicity (XP) division of the ministry said. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh posted a picture on X showing former prime minister Indira Gandhi telling Modi that "you shouldn't have bowed". Khera said when the Congress asks

these tough questions, BJP calls it anti-national, "but the real betrayal is putting Pakistani lives before Indian lives and running away from the truth". "BJP should also answer why their own PM Morarji Desai was awarded Pakistan's highest civilian honour, Nishan-e-Pakistan", for leaking RAW secrets and compromising India's security. Is this the BJP's legacy of nationalism?" Khera asked. He said the Congress "salutes our forces, not a government that weakens them through diplomatic blunders, poor intelligence management, and misplaced priorities". He also demanded that the prime minister convene an all-party meeting and call a special session of Parliament to place the full truth before the nation, saying "India deserves answers, not theatrics". Congress social media department head Supriya Shrinatne also slammed Malviya's posts, saying his track record is filled with such controversial actions. "Those who preach about dignity are conspicuously silent today. Is it acceptable to place the photograph of an elected Member of Parliament alongside that of Pakistan's Army Chief, Asim Munir? "Frankly, such actions are unacceptable and should not be tolerated at any cost. Congress will take legal action, and action has already been initiated,"

Shrinatne said. Malviya retorted, saying, "Worse, their most reliable allies seem to be sitting right here in India -- Rahul Gandhi and Congress leaders, whose statements conveniently echo Pakistan's narrative." "What a disgraceful fall for the Congress party -- from leading India's freedom struggle to questioning its own armed forces," he said. BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari alleged Gandhi's "consistent attempts" to undermine India's global narrative, especially after Operation Sindoor, where the world stood firmly with India, revealed a "dangerous intent". "His heart beats not for Bharat, but for Pakistan. He isn't just misguided. He's a threat," Bhandari charged. Gandhi had earlier said, "EAM Jaishankar's silence isn't just telling, it's damning. So I'll ask again: How many Indian aircraft did we lose because Pakistan knew?" "This wasn't a lapse. It was a crime. And the nation deserves the truth," Gandhi had said. Khera had also attacked Jaishankar saying the country is asking questions on why Pakistan was forewarned about Operation Sindoor, alleging that "Sindoor ke saath sauda deta raha aur Pradhan mantri chup raha" (deals were struck at the cost of Sindoor and the prime minister remained silent.