

## Himachal CM: Telangana is Preparing to Generate Electricity in Himachal, Expressed its Desire By Meeting CM Sukhu in Delhi



**Diary Times Desk :** Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka met Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu in New Delhi on Thursday. The Telangana Deputy Chief Minister presented a letter expressing interest in Seli HEP (400 MW) and Miyar HEP (120 MW) power projects. The Telangana government urged the Himachal Pradesh government to submit a Memorandum of Understanding in this regard so that the matter could be taken forward. The Chief Minister said that in response to the State Government's proposal for implementation of 22 hydropower projects on BOOT basis from interested States/Union Territories and State PSUs/Central PSUs, a team of senior officials of Telangana Power Department has visited Himachal Pradesh. The team also held discussions with Power Secretary Rakesh Kanwar. The team also visited the sites of Seli and Miyar Hydropower Projects and recommended that interest may be expressed for sites having potential of more than 100 MW hydropower project. This step will play an important role in exploring the possibilities of generating more electricity and earning revenue for the state. Senior officials of Telangana and Himachal Pradesh government were also present on the occasion.

## Kejriwal allowed Yamuna to get polluted, forced Delhiites to drink its water: Amit Shah

**Agencies :** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday alleged that AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal accused the BJP of poisoning Yamuna as he sensed his party's imminent defeat in the assembly polls because he allowed the river to get polluted and forced people of Delhi to drink its water. Addressing a public meeting in Rohini Assembly constituency, Shah alleged corruption in use of money meant for cleaning Yamuna river during the AAP's rule, as he exhorted people to dislodge the Kejriwal-led party from power in Delhi. "Kejriwal is making (such) excuses because he gave away the money meant for cleaning Yamuna to AAP's corruption," Shah charged, adding, "Kejriwal is resorting to such petty.

## Maha Kumbh Stampede: PIL in Supreme Court Seeks Safety Measures for Pilgrims

**Agencies :** A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court, seeking directions to ensure the safety and security of pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh festival in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. The petition comes after a stampede on January 29, resulted in the deaths of 30 pilgrims and injured over 60 others. Advocate Vishal Tiwari, who filed the PIL, accused the Uttar Pradesh Government of "lapses, negligence, and utter failure of administration" that led to the stampede. He sought action against UP government officials for their alleged negligence and lapses. "Direct the state of Uttar Pradesh to submit a status report on the Maha Kumbh stampede incident that took place on January 29, and also direct to initiate legal action against the persons, authorities and officials for their negligent conduct," the petitioner submitted. The petition was mentioned for an early hearing before a bench led by CJI Sanjiv Khanna, which asked the petitioner to follow the procedure and approached the top court's Registry. Tiwari has also sought directions to state governments to prevent stampedes at crowded places like Maha Kumbh.



## RG Kar financial irregularities case: Trial court slaps show-cause notice on CBI

**Agencies :** A trial court has slapped a show-cause on Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for procedural lapses in passing on information to the court about the West Bengal government's nod for framing charges and trial process against former RG Kar principal Sandip Ghosh in the case related to financial irregularities in the institution. On January 28, the CBI informed Calcutta High Court's single-judge Bench of Tirthankar Ghosh about the clearance from the state government to start the charge-framing and trial process. Now, the trial court has taken objection as to why the CBI has not informed the same court about the development. It is learnt that the judge of the trial court has directed the central agency to give a written explanation for why the same court was not informed about it. The CBI officials investigating the case received the no-objection certificate from the state government on the evening of January 27 and informed the Calcutta High Court about it the next day.

## Goa: School academic year to start in April, followed by summer vacation

**Agencies :** The academic year for Classes 6 to 12 at schools in Goa will begin from April instead of June from this year, the government announced on Thursday. Director of Education Shailesh Zingade, in a circular, said academic year 2025-26 will commence from April for Classes 6 to 12 at all schools, including the government-aided ones and those receiving no government aid. Classes will be held till 11.30 am in April, while there will be a summer vacation from May 1 to June 3. After the schools reopen on June 4, the regular timetable will be followed, the circular said.

## CBI closes UGC-NET paper leak case, finds no evidence of breach

**Agencies :** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a closure report in the UGC-NET 2024 paper leak case, concluding that there was no evidence to support allegations of a leak. The closure report, submitted before a special court, follows an extensive investigation into claims that the question paper had surfaced on the darknet and was being sold via Telegram. The court will now review the findings and decide whether to accept the report or direct further investigation. The agency has also submitted its conclusions to the Union Ministry of Education. The CBI's probe revealed that the so-called "leaked" question paper was, in fact, a digitally altered screenshot circulated by a student attempting to profit from the situation. Officials stated that on the day of the exam, a manipulated image of the question.

## Himachal News: This time the department will buy wheat at Rs 2425 per quintal in Himachal, registration of farmers has started

**Diary Times Desk :** This time in Himachal Pradesh, the Food Supply Department will buy wheat from farmers at the rate of Rs 2425 per quintal. Last year, the department had bought wheat crop at the rate of Rs 2275 per quintal. This time it has increased by Rs 150. The department has set up 11 procurement centers in the state to buy crops for the April-June 2025 session of Rabi crop. Farmers will have to apply through the department's portal to sell the wheat crop and old farmers will have to renew. Registration of farmers to sell the crop has also started. So far 11 farmers have registered. This time the Food Supply Department has set a target of buying four thousand metric tonnes of wheat in Kangra district. Last time 12792 quintals of wheat were purchased. Dhaula Kuan in Sirmaur, APMC Paonta Sahib, APMC Rampur in Una, Market Yard Takrala, Baddi Industry Shed Malpur in Solan, Market Yard Nalagarh, Fatehpur Grain Market.

## Himachal News: These women of Himachal Pradesh will get three lakh rupees to build houses, notification issued

**Diary Times Desk :** Women registered with Himachal Pradesh Building and Construction Workers Welfare Board will now get financial assistance of Rs 3 lakh for building houses. The state government has issued its notification on Thursday. This decision will make the dream of widows, disabled women and single women in Himachal to build their own houses come true. The Chief Minister had announced the Widow, Single and Disabled Women Housing Scheme in the budget speech. Apart from three lakh rupees for building a house, additional assistance has also been included for the construction of essential facilities like kitchen, toilet and bathroom. The woman should be unmarried and should not live with her parents. The woman should have 2 biswa land, even if it is provided by the government and the name should be in the family register. The woman should not have sold the house for 25 years. It has also been made mandatory to get a no objection certificate from the Panchayat Secretary and urban bodies. The annual income should be less than 2.50 lakhs. Women will have to apply to the labor officer.



## 'Poison in Yamuna' row: EC gives Kejriwal more time to provide evidence

**Agencies :** Dissatisfied with his response, the Election Commission on Thursday asked Arvind Kejriwal not to mix the issue of increased ammonia in the Yamuna with his allegation of river poisoning and gave him a fresh opportunity to explain his charge, prompting the AAP supremo to accuse poll body chief Rajiv Kumar of doing politics. The EC asked the former Delhi chief minister to provide factual evidence with specific and pointed response to the type, quantity, nature and manner of poisoning of the Yamuna. Kejriwal, who is contesting the Delhi polls from the New Delhi seat, was asked to share details of engineers, location and methodology of detecting the "poison" by Delhi Jal Board staff by Friday 11 am, failing which the Commission will be free to take appropriate decisions in the matter.

## Jairam Thakur: Leader of Opposition said- Why does the CM who spent crores on his favourite people avoid new officers?

**Diary Times Desk :** Leader of Opposition Jairam Thakur said that the Sukhu government is harming the state every day with its strange acts. Regarding the Sukhu government's refusal to appoint IAS and IPS officers, the Leader of Opposition said that on one hand the Chief Minister includes tainted officers in his advisory board and on the other hand he refuses to appoint officers who have contributed to the development of the state. Jairam Thakur said that why does the Chief Minister, who spends crores of rupees on his favorite friends and close people, have an objection to administrative and police officers? When the government will not appoint new officers today, how will the state get officers as per its requirement tomorrow? Who will do the work of those officers? Does the Chief Minister want his friends to get the work of the officers done? He should know that the work of the officers is done by officers and not the close friends of the Chief Minister. Therefore, the Chief Minister is requested to stop this period of system degradation. Jairam Thakur said that we live in a federal system. This is a system given by our Constitution. The federal system is a feature of our Constitution. Where work is done on various issues between the Center and the State with mutual coordination and consent.

## As arrears of cases mount, SC relaxes norms for appointment of ad hoc judges in HCs

**Agencies :** Citing huge pendency of cases in high courts across India, the Supreme Court on Thursday relaxed the conditions for appointment of ad hoc judges in high courts. "Each HC may appoint ad hoc judges by taking recourse to Article 224A of the Constitution of India. The appointment of judges shall not exceed 10 per cent of the sanctioned strength. The ad hoc judges will sit in a bench presided over by a sitting judge of the High Court and decide pending criminal appeals," a Special Bench of Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna said. Relaxing the conditions for appointment of ad hoc judges in high courts, the Bench -- which also included Justice BR Gavai and Justice Surya Kant -- decided to keep in abeyance the condition in its April 2021 judgment that ad hoc judges as per Article 224 of the Constitution can be appointed only if the vacancies are more than 20% of the sanctioned strength. Article 224A provides for appointment of retired high court judges as ad hoc judges. Acting on a PIL filed by NGO Lok Prahari seeking invocation of Article 224A for appointment of ad hoc judges.

## Himachal News: The wait is over, after 22 years, Uhal project started generating more than 36.70 MW of electricity than its capacity

**Diary Times Desk :** After a long wait of 22 years, electricity generation started in Himachal Pradesh's ambitious Uhal III hydroelectric project from Thursday. Under this project, unit number two has generated more than its capacity of 36.70 MW electricity. Its capacity is 33.33 MW. The project management is preparing to start electricity generation from units number one and three in the coming days. According to the board management, after the start of electricity generation from all three units, a total of 400 million units of electricity will be generated annually. This will give the state an additional income of 200 to 250 crores. Uhal Project Managing Director Devendra Singh said that all the electric tests have been successful in all three units. Electricity generation has also started in unit number two. Electricity will be generated in February in the 33.33 MW units one and three installed in the power house. At the same time, as soon as there is sufficient availability of water in the month of June, 110 MW of electricity will also be produced in the 100 MW project. After the completion of electric tests in January, electricity generation has now started. The state government will earn crores of rupees from this. An annual revenue of more than two hundred crores will also fill the government treasury. When it was tried to start power generation in the year 2020 in the Uhal project, the hopes of power generation were also shattered due to the bursting of the pan stock of the project. During this, the project management had to bear a loss of more than one thousand crores. This time no untoward incident occurred during power generation. On Thursday, Civil Superintending Engineer of Uhal Project Sanjeev Dhiman, Superintending Engineer of Electric Wing Raman said that success has been achieved in generating electricity.

## Foreign interference commission 'not mandated' to probe Nijjar murder: Canadian mission

**Agencies :** Canadian high commission in India on Thursday said Canada's foreign interference commission is not mandated to probe the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh separatist. The high commission's remarks came following a reference to the Nijjar killing finding mention in a report of the foreign interference commission that probed allegations of meddling by China, Russia and certain other countries in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections in Canada. "The PIFI (Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference) was not mandated to investigate the murder of Nijjar," it said. "The statement in question simply reflects that, ultimately, it is up to the courts to decide accountability with respect to this complex matter, which remains under investigation," the high commission said in a brief statement. The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September 2023 of "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar on Canadian soil. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". The relations nosedived further in the second half of last year after.



## Maha Kumbh Stampede 2025: 66-year-old woman from Himachal missing in Kumbh Mela, had left on 26 January

**Diary Times Desk :** 66-year-old Preeto Devi, a resident of Lahra village under Gram Panchayat Lahra, has gone missing in the Kumbh Mela. On January 26, a group of about 65/70 people headed by Pandit Vasu Dev left for Prayagraj Kumbh. 66-year-old Preeto Devi, wife of Chhotu Ram, is also included in this. The case of Preeto Devi getting separated from the Kumbh Mela came to light on January 28, but after a lot of hard work, the group members found her with the help of the police on January 29 at 11:00 am. After this, the elderly woman again got separated from her group in the evening. Pandit Vasu Dev, who is leading the group, said that Preeto Devi's mental balance was also not good due to being alone all night after getting separated on January 28. The group members are engaged in the investigation of the woman. The daughter-in-law of the elderly woman Preeto Devi said that yesterday at 11:00 am, she got the information about her mother-in-law being found and at 8:00 pm again she got a call about her disappearance. In the morning itself, four people including Preeto Devi's son Deshraj, Pradhan Rakesh Kumar left to look for Preeto Devi, while five people from the tour group are busy searching for her in Kumbh. Every possible effort is being made to find her, including through social media.



## Himachal News: Hotel manager murdered in Himachal, CID also arrested three hotel workers

**Diary Times Desk :** CID has arrested two more people in the murder of the manager of a private hotel in Banikhet. Both of them are hotel employees. On Thursday, CID presented both of them in the court of Dalhousie. The court has sent both of them on three-day police remand. So far, CID has arrested five people in this case. These include two policemen and three hotel employees. CID will disclose the case only after completing its investigation. On the night of 31 December, there was a clash between policemen and hotel employees in a private hotel in Banikhet. The hotel manager died in this. Police arrested two policemen on the charge of murder. But the family was not satisfied with the police investigation. Due to this, this case was handed over to CID. CID has made three new arrests in this case. These include three hotel employees.

## Illegal Mining Case: ED filed prosecution complaint against seven people including Gyan Chand in illegal mining case

**Diary Times Desk :** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a prosecution complaint in the illegal mining case related to the Beas river of Himachal and Yamuna river of Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh). In the prosecution complaint filed before the Special Court Ghaziabad, Gyan Chand of Himachal and 7 other persons have been made accused. The court has also taken cognizance of the prosecution complaint filed by the ED on January 17. The case was initiated on the basis of formal complaints and intelligence inputs, which alleged that illegal sand and mineral mining work is being done on the river bed of Beas river by several mining mafias including Gyan Chand. It is alleged that criminal income of crores of rupees has been earned from these illegal mining operations. The ED had started the investigation on the basis of 6 FIRs registered by various police stations of Kangra and Una.

## HPBOSE: Class 3rd, 5th, 8th and 9th examinations in summer schools from March 4, here is the datesheet

**Diary Times Desk :** The School Education Board will start the annual examinations of regular and SOS candidates of class 3, 5 and 8 from March 4. The examinations of class 9 and 11 will be held from March 5 to 27. The examinations of class 3 and 5 will be held from 9:45 am to 1 pm, class 8 examinations from 8:45 am to 12 noon, class 9 and 11 examinations will be held in the second session from 12:45 pm to 4 pm. Candidates have to reach the examination center 30 minutes before the start of the examination. Board Secretary Dr. Major Vishal Sharma said that the question papers are provided to the candidates of class 3, 5 and 8 by the board, while the examinations are conducted by the schools. The examinations will be held till March 17. The answer sheets will be allotted to the candidates of class 3 and 5 at 9:45 am and they will get 15 minutes to enter their details on the answer sheet, while the examination will start at 10 am. The exams for Environmental Education will be held on March 7, Mathematics on 10th, Hindi on 13th and English on 15th. For class 5, Environment Day will be held on March 7, Mathematics on 10th, English on 13th.

## Rishi Dhawan: Rishi Dhawan became the second player from the state to play 100 matches in first class

**Diary Times Desk :** Rishi Dhawan has become the second player from the state to play 100 matches in first class cricket. Earlier, the record of playing more than 100 matches was in the name of Paras Dogra. Paras Dogra has played 141 matches. In this, he has scored 9,753 runs. Paras Dogra also holds the record of scoring the most runs in Ranji. Apart from this, he also holds the record of scoring 31 centuries in first class. Even though Paras Dogra has played more matches than Rishi Dhawan in first class cricket, but Rishi is the only player to play international one-day and T-20 matches. Apart from this, Rishi Dhawan has played 134 one-day matches in domestic cricket. Whereas Paras Dogra has played 124 matches. In domestic cricket, Rishi Dhawan has played 135 T-20 matches and Paras Dogra has played 105 T-20 matches. Now both the players have retired from limited overs cricket (T-20 and OD). After this Ranji, they have decided to retire from the red ball as well. After Paras Dogra and Rishi Dhawan, the names of Himachali players who have played the most matches in first class cricket are Sangram Singh, Rajiv Nayyar and Vikramjeet Malik. These players have played more than 80.

## HPU Shimla: Preparations are being made to study through INEP in ICDOL along with colleges, curriculum is being prepared

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal Pradesh University is preparing to implement NEP-2020 simultaneously in the graduation degree of its affiliated colleges along with the distance education institute Center for Distance and Online Education (CDOE). The university is going to prepare a one-year course of UG degree in affiliated degree colleges and give it final approval. Along with this, the process of preparing the study material to be given to the students according to the new syllabus is also starting in the distance education institute to implement the policy in the new session. HPU has so far prepared only a one-year course for UG. CDOE Director Prof. Sanju Karol has demanded from the DS of the university to provide at least two-year courses made under NEP for every subject. With this, the syllabus can be prepared.

## Magh Gupt Navratri 2025: Gupt Navratri of Magh month begins in Shaktipeeth Jwalamukhi, recitations will be held for eight days

**Diary Times Desk :** The Gupt Navratri of Magh month has started from Thursday in the world famous Jwalamukhi temple, which will continue till 7 February. Today, the Gupt Navratri was formally started by Jwalamukhi MLA Sanjay Ratna, temple officer Manohar Lal Sharma, DSP RP Jaswal, temple trust members and additional sub-divisional magistrate Anshul Chandel, priest class with proper worship. Priest Sabha head Avinendra Sharma got MLA Sanjay Ratna to take a pledge and do proper worship and Kanya Puja. Along with this, the priest class and learned Pandits were also made to take a formal pledge of chanting the mother's name. On this occasion, the priest class will do Vishwa Kalyan and Vishwa Shanti Puja and Paath for 8 consecutive days. During Gupt Navratri, the basic mantra of Maa Jwala, Batuk Bhairav, Ganpati, Gayatri and other chants and Paaths will be done for world peace and world welfare. Temple Trust and Priest Mahasabha head Avinendra Sharma said that the priest class has maintained the ancient traditions.

## Rakesh Rathore, Congress MP From Uttar Pradesh, Arrested In Rape Case

**Agencies :** Congress MP Rakesh Rathore was today arrested in a rape case filed against him, officials said. Rathore, the Lok Sabha MP from Uttar Pradesh's Sitapur, was arrested when he was holding a press conference. Police registered a case against Rathore, who is also the General Secretary of the Congress' Uttar Pradesh unit, on January 17 following a complaint from a woman, who accused him of sexually exploiting her for the past four years. She alleged that he promised to marry her and make her political career. She also shared the call details and call recordings with the police. Last week, the woman's husband also filed a separate complaint against five individuals, alleging Rathore and his son were pressuring the family to settle the case. Earlier Wednesday, the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court rejected his anticipatory bail petition and asked him to surrender. Prior to the high court, the MP-MLA court in Sitapur had rejected his anticipatory bail plea on January 23.

## Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid seeks interim bail to attend Parliament session

**Agencies :** The Delhi high court on Thursday asked the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to respond to a petition by Jammu and Kashmir parliamentarian Engineer Rashid seeking interim bail in a terror funding case to attend the upcoming Parliament session. A bench of justice Vikas Mahajan asked senior counsel Sidharth Luthra, who appeared for the federal agency, to seek instructions and fixed February 4 as the next date of hearing. Rashid, who defeated National Conference leader Omar Abdullah from Baramulla Lok Sabha seat in 2024, has been in Tihar jail since August 2019. He approached the high court to seek directions to a city court to decide his bail plea in a terror-funding case. On December 23, additional sessions judge Chander Jit Singh refused to pass an order on his bail plea, citing jurisdictional issues. At Thursday's hearing, Rashid urged the court to release him on interim bail from January 30 to April 5 or on custody parole from January 30 to April 4 in case the court was not inclined to grant interim bail. The single-judge bench asked the NIA to respond. "However, Mr Hariharan (who represented Rashid) appearing for the petitioner submits that in the meanwhile he may be granted interim bail. Mr Siddharth Luthra appearing for the respondent seeks time to take instructions on the plea to be released on interim bail.

## Swati Maliwal dumps trash outside AAP chief's home in protest over cleanliness



**Agencies :** Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal staged a protest in Delhi on Thursday, dumping garbage outside the residence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal. The protest came ahead of the Delhi elections on February 5. Maliwal, accompanied by local residents, first visited a garbage dump in the Vikaspuri area. She criticised the AAP chief, saying, "We will take this garbage to Arvind Kejriwal's residence and ask him what to do with this filthy gift he has given to every area of Delhi." Maliwal claimed the situation regarding hygiene and infrastructure in Delhi had deteriorated. She cited complaints from women in Vikaspuri who reported a garbage dump forming on their road despite multiple complaints to the local legislator. "Every nook and corner of Delhi is dirty, roads are broken, and drains are overflowing," Maliwal said.

## Woman Raped, Acid Poured On Her In Front Of Children In Assam

**Agencies :** A 30-year-old woman was allegedly raped and poured acid on in front of her two children in Assam's Cachar district, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place on January 22 when the 28-year-old accused - the victim's neighbour - barged into her house. According to the police, the two had engaged in a verbal spat during which the victim had snubbed her neighbour. Hours later, the accused forced his way into the woman's home when her husband was away. When the victim's husband returned home, he found his wife on the floor with her mouth, hands, and feet tied. An acid-like substance.

## At Least 15 Tents Burnt In Fire At Maha Kumbh, None Hurt

**Agencies :** At least 15 tents were burnt on Thursday after they caught fire near Chamanganj Chowki outside Sector 22 in the Maha Kumbh Mela area with officials saying there was no loss of life. Chief Fire Officer (Kumbh) Pramod Sharma said information about a fire was received this afternoon and the fire was extinguished immediately. He said due to lack of road, fire engines had difficulty in reaching the spot. However, the fire was completely extinguished and there was no loss of life or injury, he added. Mr Sharma said that according.

## BJP Wins Chandigarh Mayor Election, Upsets AAP-Congress

**Agencies :** The BJP registered a victory in the Chandigarh mayoral elections, winning with 19 votes against the 17 votes of the AAP-Congress alliance. The election saw BJP candidate Harpreet Kaur Babla emerge victorious over AAP's Prem Lata. The Chandigarh mayoral poll was a high-stakes contest between the BJP and the AAP-Congress alliance. Polling for the post began at 11:20 am in the assembly hall of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation and ended at 12:19 pm. The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation consists of 35 members.

## Confluence Of Negligence, Corruption: Rahul Gandhi Targets AAP On Yamuna

**Agencies :** The row over Arvind Kejriwal's comments on Yamuna continued today with Congress's Rahul Gandhi this time holding him accountable for the river's sorry state. In a video released today, Mr Gandhi is seen doing a thorough recce of the river, taking a boat ride, talking to boat men, locals and researchers. His conclusion -- very little has been done over the last five years to improve the condition of the river that flows through the heart of Delhi and contributes to the pollution of Ganga. In the video, Mr Gandhi begins where he left off yesterday -- "Five years ago, Mr Kejriwal said he would take a dip in the Yamuna". Then begins the detailed exploration that takes in the garbage and sewage dumped in the river and views of people taking a dip in the muck. The researcher he spoke to, gave a 360 degree view of the situation, including the pollutants flowing in from the upper reaches, diversion of water that is making it difficult to flush out the garbage and the faulty sewage treatment plants that are contributing to the mess.



## Poll Panel Raps Arvind Kejriwal In "Yamuna Poisoned" Row, He Hits Back

**Agencies :** "Drink if you dare" - Arvind Kejriwal's dramatic response to the Election Commission's demand for proof to back claims the BJP's Haryana government attempted "genocide" by mixing "poison" in Yamuna water supplied to Delhi. "We have four bottles... will send to each one of them... please drink and show us. Then we will believe," he said, pointing to a row of plastic bottles filled, he said, with Yamuna water. Hours earlier the EC directed Mr Kejriwal submit "factual evidence" by 11 am Friday. It also sought answers to five questions, including what kind of 'poison' was used, who detected its presence, and how and where it was found. In its letter, the poll body dismissed last night's submission - a social media post in which Mr Kejriwal cited Delhi Jal Board data that said ammonia levels in the Yamuna had reached critical levels, and that it was "extremely poisonous for human health". The EC acknowledged receipt of claims of a "sharp increase in ammonia levels in the water".

## Palestinian Ministry Says Israel Kills 10 In West Bank Amid Gaza Ceasefire

**Agencies :** The Palestinian health ministry said an Israeli drone strike in a village in the occupied West Bank killed at least 10 people on Wednesday, while the military said it had struck an "armed cell". "There are 10 martyrs due to the occupation's bombing of the town of Tamun in the Tubas district" of the northern West Bank, the Ramallah-based ministry said. The Palestinian Red Crescent had earlier said that seven people had been killed in the strike. The Israeli military told AFP its forces were involved in a "counterterrorism operation" in the area of Tamun. As part of the operation, an Israeli "aircraft, with the direction of ISA (security agency) intelligence, struck an armed terrorist cell in the area of Tamun", the military said in a statement. A Palestinian official confirmed to AFP the attack had been carried out by a drone. Palestinian militant group Hamas issued a statement condemning the strike. "The escalating crimes of the fascist occupation in the West Bank and its continued policy of assassinations against our heroic resistance fighters and mujahideen... are a reaffirmation of the occupation's criminal approach against our people and a failed attempt to break our valiant resistance," it said.

## FBI Pick Kash Patel To Be Grilled Over Promise To Persecute Trump's Foes

**Agencies :** Kash Patel, President Trump's nominee for FBI director, is set to face intense scrutiny from Democratic senators at his confirmation hearing. Patel's loyalty to Trump and his desire to overhaul the FBI have raised concerns about his ability to maintain the bureau's independence. As a former aide to the House Intelligence Committee and ex-federal prosecutor, Patel has been vocal about his skepticism of government surveillance and the "deep state." His comments have alarmed critics, who point to his lack of experience and questionable judgment. In a podcast interview, Patel suggested that he would "shut down" the FBI's headquarters and reopen it as a "museum of the deep state." He also stated that he would send the 7,000 employees to "go chase down criminals" and "go be cops." Patel's close relationship with Trump has also raised eyebrows.

## No Survivors In US Plane-Helicopter Crash, 28 Bodies Recovered From River



**Agencies :** There are no survivors in the midair collision between a US Army Blackhawk helicopter and a passenger jet in Washington DC, a fire official said. Twenty-eight bodies have been recovered from the Potomac River. "At this point we don't believe there are any survivors," Washington Fire Chief John Donnelly told a news conference at Reagan National Airport, outside the US capital. "We are now at a point where we are switching from a rescue operation to a recovery operation." Mr Donnelly said 300 first responders had been involved in the operation - most of it conducted in pitch darkness. "These responders found extremely frigid conditions, they found heavy wind, they found ice on the water, and they operated all night in those conditions," he said. There were no details on the cause of the crash, with transport officials saying both aircraft were on standard flight patterns on a clear night with good visibility. US Figure Skating said several athletes, coaches and officials were aboard the flight, while officials in Moscow confirmed married Russian couple Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov -- who won the 1994 world pairs title -- were on the jet.

## Salwan Momika, Man Who Burnt Quran In 2023 Sparking Huge Protests, Shot Dead In Sweden

**Agencies :** A man who repeatedly burnt the Quran in 2023 in Sweden, sparking outrage in Muslim countries, has been shot dead, media reported Thursday as police confirmed a man died in a shooting the day before. A Stockholm court was due to rule on Thursday whether Salwan Momika, a Christian Iraqi who burned Qurans at a slew of protests, was guilty of inciting ethnic hatred. It postponed the ruling until February 3, saying that "because Salwan Momika has died, more time is needed." Police said in a statement they had been alerted to a shooting in the city of Sodertalje, where Momika lived. The shooting occurred indoors and when police arrived they found a man.

## Bangladesh's Yunus Meets George Soros' Son After Trump Freezes Foreign Aid

**Agencies :** Muhammad Yunus, who leads the interim government in Bangladesh, has met Alex Soros, the son of US billionaire George Soros, days after the new Trump administration paused all foreign aid, including to the Asian country that saw a regime change last year. Sharing details about their meeting - the second in three months - Mr Yunus said in an online post that their conversation was focused on rebuilding the economy and carrying out vital economic reforms. "The Open Society Foundations leadership on Wednesday met Chief Adviser to discuss Bangladesh's efforts to rebuild the economy, trace siphoned-off assets, combat misinformation, and carry out vital economic reforms," the Chief Adviser's office said in an online post. Open Society Foundations (OSF) is founded by Hungarian-born George Soros. His son Alex is its chairperson. Besides economic reforms, the delegation that also included OSF president Binaifer Nowrojee discussed cybersecurity, the Rohingya crisis, and media freedom in Dhaka yesterday, local media reported. Alex Soros pledged support for the Bangladesh interim government's reform efforts during the meeting and said the students' movement, which led to the fall of the Hasina regime last August, opened "great opportunities" to set a new course for the country.

## What NASA Said After Trump Roped In Musk To Rescue Stranded Sunita Williams

**Agencies :** NASA on Wednesday (local time) said it was working with billionaire Elon Musk's SpaceX to safely return the astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, who are for months struck at International Space Station (ISS), back home "as soon as practical." The development came a day after US President Donald Trump said that SpaceX would "soon" begin a mission to repatriate the two American astronauts. NASA and SpaceX are expeditiously working to safely return the agency's SpaceX Crew-9 astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore as soon as practical, while also preparing for the launch of Crew-10 to complete a handover between expeditions, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said in a post on X. Veteran astronauts Wilmore and Williams arrived at the ISS in June 2024 aboard Boeing's Starliner. They were due to spend only eight days on the orbiting laboratory, but technical problems on the spacecraft prompted NASA.

## 'Dream Of The Desert': Saudi Arabia's First Luxury Train Unveiled

**Agencies :** Saudi Arabia is launching the Middle East's first luxury train, the 'Dream of the Desert'. Saudi Arabia's "Dream of the Desert" luxury train will begin its inaugural journey by the end of 2026, traversing the country's stunning desert landscapes. The 1,300-kilometer route, utilising existing railway lines, will depart from Riyadh and travel north to Al Qurayyat, near the Jordanian border. The one- to two-day journey will showcase breathtaking scenery across Al Qassim, Hail, and Al Jouf, including a stretch bordering the King Salman bin Abdulaziz Nature Reserve, Conde Nast Traveller reported. Produced by the Italian hospitality company Arsenale Group and commissioned by Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR), Dream of the Desert will feature 14 carriages housing 34 luxurious suites. The first glimpse of its interiors, crafted by Lebanese architect Aline Asmar d'Amman, reveals opulent gold-adorned ceilings, tile-fronted bars, plush velvet banquettes, and elements reflecting Saudi traditions. Reception areas draw inspiration from majlis settings, showcasing intricately carved wood and desert-toned hues.



## Punjab jail authorities under fire for delaying justice, possible 'unholy nexus' with accused

**Agencies :** The Punjab and Haryana High Court has called for strict vigilance and corrective action against erring jail authorities in Punjab following repeated lapses in producing accused persons before the trial courts on scheduled dates. Admonishing the jail authorities for complete disregard for statutory duties, the court asserted that such lapses delayed the administration of justice and raised serious concerns about potential malpractices within the system. Expressing apprehensions over the possibility of an "unholy nexus" between certain jail officials and accused persons, Justice Manjari Nehru Kaul of the high court further warned that such practices would amount to a blatant violation of judicial orders. "The authorities would be well advised to take steps to prevent such lapses in the future and to root out such malpractices," the court asserted. It further directed forwarding the order's copy to Punjab Home Secretary for necessary action and compliance. The directive came during the hearing of a case where the court was compelled to intervene due to the repeated non-production of the accused before the trial court. "Before parting, this court would want to comment upon the conduct of the jail authorities in the present matter, which is appalling and reflects an utter disregard.



## Cabinet minister Anil Vij stops Janta Darbar, warns of protest against officials' inaction

**Agencies :** Haryana Cabinet Minister Anil Vij expressed his dissatisfaction with the functioning of officials, stating that they fail to follow his directions. As a result, he has stopped holding weekly Janta Darbars, which were intended to address public grievances in Ambala Cantonment. Moreover, Vij threatened to start an agitation and even consider a fast unto death to ensure that public works are completed. He said, "The officials don't follow orders. I have stopped holding weekly Janta Darbars, and may also stop attending the grievances committee meetings. People of Ambala Cantonment have elected me seven times, and if need be, will sit on fast unto death like Jagjit Singh Dallewal to get their work done." This is not the first time Vij has publicly expressed his displeasure with his own government and officials. Previously, he accused party workers and officials of conspiring against him in the assembly election last year.

## Rohtak team raids diagnostic centre in Delhi; doctor, tout held for prenatal sex detection

**Agencies :** A state Health Department team from Rohtak district raided a diagnostic centre in Delhi and nabbed a radiologist and a tout on the charge of determining foetal sex on Thursday. The ultrasound equipment used for the purpose has been sealed. Rohtak Deputy Commissioner Dharendra Khadgata said the local health authorities were directed to conduct a raid on Arogya Diagnostic and Dental Centre located at Dwarka in New Delhi as the Health Department had received specific information that illegal sex-determination was being carried out at the centre. "Following the directions of the Deputy Commissioner, a decoy customer was prepared by the Health Department. A deal was struck to determine the gender of her foetus for Rs 50,000 through a tout. The tout asked the pregnant woman to visit the said diagnostic centre in New Delhi. A team of the PC-PNDT cell led by Nodal Officer Dr Vishvjeet Rathee and Medical Officer Dr Mohit Gill accompanied the woman. Dr Vineet Madan, a radiologist, and Shailender Mathur, a tout, were nabbed during the raid," said the Civil Surgeon. Dr Vishvjeet Rathee said that marked currency notes of Rs 50,000 were handed over to the decoy customer, who gave those to a tout.

## Schoolkids in villages fare poorly in reading Punjabi

**Agencies :** Only 34% students of Class III at Punjab Government schools in rural areas can read a Class II-level text, reveals the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)-2024 for Rural India. However, government schools have performed better than private ones when it comes to reading ability and solving the arithmetic problems. Shockingly, over 15% of the Class III students, both of government and private schools, can just read alphabets in Gurmukhi script but not words, and 4.6% students couldn't even read Punjabi letters. The survey on learning levels of children in rural Punjab revealed that 28% per cent of Class III students can read Class I-level text while only 34% of them were able to read Class II-level text. The zonal manager for ASER in Punjab, Prabhsimran Singh said 600 villages, 11,967 households and 20,226 children in the age group of 3 to 16 were part of the rural survey. "Though there has been a significant improvement in solving arithmetic problems, the reading abilities still remain a cause for concern," he said. In terms of solving arithmetic problems, at least 51% of government schools could do subtraction. Since the 2022 survey, government schools have gained by 3.4% in terms of reading.

## Chandigarh ex-mayor Kuldeep Kumar gets interim bail ahead of MC election

**Agencies :** The Punjab and Haryana High Court today granted interim anticipatory bail to former mayor and AAP councillor Kuldeep Kumar in a cheating case registered by the Chandigarh Police. Issuing notice of motion to the Union Territory of Chandigarh, Justice Mahabir Singh Sindhu also fixed February 6 as the next date of hearing. "In the meanwhile, petitioner shall join investigation before the investigating officer, but he be not arrested till the next date of hearing," Justice Sindhu asserted. The case had garnered considerable attention due to its timing just before the mayoral election. After going through the FIR, Justice Sindhu asserted it transpired that the allegations precisely were regarding the transmission of Rs 75,000 to the account of one Rahul Chanaliya, stated to be the brother-in-law of present petitioner. The amount was allegedly transmitted through Google Pay by way of multiple transactions from September 10 to September 13 last year. But it was nowhere discernible that any amount was paid to the petitioner. Besides, the present FIR was registered on January 29, but "there is no explanation for delay of more than four months".

## 2 more accused arrested in BSP leader Harbilas Rajjumajra's murder case

**Agencies :** The Ambala police have arrested two more accused in connection with the murder of BSP leader Harbilas Rajjumajra. The accused, Abhishek from Shahzadpur and Rajan from Naraingarh in Ambala, were apprehended after a brief exchange of fire in the Shahzadpur area on Thursday. Both accused suffered bullet injuries to their legs and were taken to the Community Health Centre (CHC) Shahzadpur for treatment. They were later referred to Civil Hospital Ambala City. According to the police, the CIA-1 unit had been searching for the accused. When the accused spotted the CIA-1 team, they opened fire, prompting the officials to retaliate. Two weapons were seized from their possession. The police confirmed that both accused were involved in the murder case. Their backgrounds are being verified, and further investigation is underway. This development comes a day after the main shooter, Sagar, was killed in an encounter with the STF Haryana and Ambala police. Sagar's body was handed over to his family after the postmortem examination.



## National Flag at the Ridge to be shifted to another location

**Diary Times Desk :** As per the directions of the state government, the National flag that has been hoisted at the historic Ridge in the heart of the state's capital will soon be shifted to another suitable location. The decision has been taken in view of recent widening and restructuring work of the Ridge, which has been completed. Additionally, the rain shelter at The Ridge will also be shifted. MLA Shimla (Urban) Harish Janartha said that, on 26th January, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu had directed to relocate the national flag to another prominent location and efforts are on to find out a suitable location by the Municipal Corporation as well as the Public Works Department. "While the PWD will serve as the Nodal department, the Municipal Corporation, Shimla will serve as the monitoring body" he added. The MLA said this after he along with several other dignitaries visited the Ridge for inspection. Built at the cost of around Rs 14 lakhs, the 100-feet long tricolour was installed at The Ridge in 2015 by then CM Virbhadra Singh.

## 30% fall in road accident deaths in 5 yrs

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal Pradesh has witnessed 30 per cent decline in road accident deaths in the past five years. According to a report published by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), as many as 806 people lost their lives due to road accidents across the state in 2024 as compared to 1,146 fatalities in 2019. The United Nations has set a global target to reduce deaths as well as injuries due to road accidents by 50 per cent, considering 2019 as the base year. With total number of road accident deaths declining by 30 per cent, the state is heading towards the target set by the United Nations. Besides Himachal Pradesh, road fatalities have declined by 16 per cent in Kerala. A total of 3,714 road accident deaths were reported in 2024 as compared to 4,440 in 2019. The report also states that human lives lost in road accidents across the country has increased by around 20 per cent in 2024. As many as 1,80,000 fatalities due to road accidents were reported throughout the country in 2024.

## Why Shimla? Parents worry as police bust 'chitta' network running throughout north India with focus on the hill state



**Diary Times Desk :** The arrest of two individuals -- one from Kolkata and one from Delhi -- has revealed the operation of an extensive drug trafficking network throughout North India, with a particular focus on Himachal Pradesh's capital, Shimla. According to Shimla Superintendent of Police (SP) Sanjeev Kumar Gandhi, the syndicate was an organised supply chain facilitated by online bookings through various social media platforms. Innocent people's accounts were being misused, and drugs were being delivered through couriers, he said. The modus operandi was exposed following the arrest of interstate drug kingpin Sandeep Shah from Kolkata earlier this month. Shah was supplying chitta (adulterated heroin) through an interstate drug nexus. His close associate, Neeraj Kashyap from Mehrauli, South Delhi, was also arrested. Shah, based in Kolkata, procured drug demand through local contacts using virtual numbers and social networking sites. Communication was conducted via WhatsApp, and payments were deposited into associates' accounts in Delhi through Unified Payment Interface (UPI) after misusing the accounts of innocent people.

## Punjab gangsters target Una businessmen: 2 arrested, possible links to Lawrence Bishnoi gang probed

**Diary Times Desk :** In a crackdown on gangster activities, the Una police arrested two gangsters with possible links to Punjab gangsters, who have been making ransom calls to businessmen in Una district. The police also raided four places, including the residences of the gangsters, and seized 367g of opium and Rs 2 lakh in drug money. According to SP Una Rakesh Singh, the arrested gangsters, Rakesh Kaushal and Rajiv Kaushal, have been involved in ransom activities, mining, and drug smuggling. Rakesh Kaushal has been taken on a five-day police remand till February 3. The police are also investigating possible links between Rajiv Kaushal and the Lawrence Vishnoi gang. The police action comes after several businessmen, including jewellers and stone crusher owners, received threat calls from Punjab gangsters demanding ransom. The Jalandhar police had recently arrested a henchman, Manjot Singh alias Mani, who confessed to accepting Rs 50,000 in advance for killing a Una-based businessman. The police registered an FIR in the matter on its own, as no complainants came forward. Deputy CM Mukesh Agnihotri had directed the Una police to register a case even if no complainants were forthcoming.

## Annual education report: In Standard VIII reading, state students placed third

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal is amongst the top states that have recorded significant gains with an overall increase of more than 10 percentage points in various spheres in schools between 2022 and 2024. The latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) report for the year 2024 in which 268 schools were inspected indicates encouraging results for Himachal, especially government schools in several areas. In case of Standard VIII reading levels Himachal has been placed at third position with 84.2 percentage with Mizoram topping the country with 90.1 followed by Kerala at 84.5 per cent. The report has indicated that the education sector which too had been hit by Covid is on a recovery path with learning levels nearing pre-pandemic stage. With declining enrolment in government schools remaining an area of concern, the overall percentage of children in the 6-14 age group has, however, declined marginally to 58.6 from 58.9 per cent in 2022. The percentage of children in the 15-16 age group who are not going to school has also risen from 2.2 to 3.0 since 2022 which is also worrisome. What can be termed good news for the hill state.

## Governor urges women to work actively in anti-drug campaign

**Diary Times Desk :** Governor Shri Shiv Pratap Shukla today expressed concern over the growing drug menace in the state, while emphasising his commitment to ensuring that every household remains free from substance abuse. He said a drug-free home leads to a safer and healthier state. While addressing an anti-drug awareness event at Chail today, the Governor highlighted the alarming spread of drug addiction, particularly among the youth and stressed the need for collective efforts to curb it. He praised the efforts of Solan and Shimla police in tackling the issue and acknowledged their dedication. He underscored the importance of reducing drug demand and ensuring proper rehabilitation of the addicts. The Governor also raised concerns regarding the operations of certain private de-addiction centres. Inspired by the Prime Minister, he launched the anti-drug campaign in Himachal Pradesh and noted positive changes within a year of his tenure. He urged women to take an active role in this campaign, given their crucial influence in family and society. Highlighting the severe consequences of drug abuse, including road accidents, he instructed university administrations to mandate an anti-drug pledge from students during admissions, with the provision of expulsion for violators.



## Rohit Sharma Won't Have To Set Foot On Pakistan Soil For CT 2025 As Report Says ICC, PCB Cancel...



**Agencies :** Whether or not Rohit Sharma will go to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy 2025 captains' meet has been a matter of intense speculation. The BCCI was against the Indian cricket team going to Pakistan - the designated hosts of the Champions Trophy - and hence the tournament was shifted to a hybrid model, where some games will be played in Dubai. Then came the issue of Rohit Sharma travelling to Pakistan for the customary captains' meet - a common practice ahead of nay big ICC event. However, now a report in Cricbuzz has claimed that Rohit Sharma will not have to go to Champions Trophy as the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) have cancelled the planned opening ceremony or captains photo-up. In fact, it quoted a source as saying: "An opening ceremony was never announced either by the ICC or the PCB. The last opening ceremony with all the participating players taking part was held in Dhaka 2011. Never after." Another report by news agency PTI quoted a source as saying the PCB was forced to cancel the pre-tournament captains' gathering because of "unavailability of teams due to tight travelling schedules."

## Shardul hat-trick wraps up Meghalaya for 86

**Agencies :** Fifties from Ajinkya Rahane (83\*) and Siddhesh Lad (89\*) put Mumbai in a dominating position after their bowlers had rolled out Meghalaya for 86. Shardul Thakur (4-43), which included a hat-trick, and Mohit Awasthi (3-27) were the wreckers-in-chief as they set the tone right from their new-ball bursts. Five of Meghalaya's top-six batters registered ducks and if not for some lower-order contributions, the total would have been far more embarrassing. Lad and Rahane then stitched an unbroken 170-run stand to extend Mumbai's position in the game as the hosts lead by 127 runs at the moment.

## India and England's battle of contrasts reaches Pune

**Agencies :** Looks like it's not the best time to be an India skipper. Having been there and done that, Rohit Sharma would know it very well. Suryakumar Yadav must also be experiencing the difficulty of it. Scores of 21(17), 4(9), 1(4) and DNB in South Africa; 0(3), 12(7) and 14(7) in the current series are surely not the numbers that one is used to associating with Suryakumar. The difference, rather solace for Suryakumar, is that his Indian team is not losing, like Rohit's. India are leading the current series against England 2-1. "I wouldn't say that consistency or predictability is a particularly high mark in T20 cricket," Ryan ten Doeschate, the team's assistant coach, said, understandably defending the captain. "The way the international T20 game has gone, we allow for a bit of inconsistency and a bit of a lean patch like he's going through at the moment. "Gauti (coach Gautam Gambhir) is very keen to back these guys and give them a long road, a long chance to prove themselves." For what it is worth, the England team's strategy of bowling short through the express pace of Jofra Archer, Mark Wood and Brydon Carse, did not make things easy for the home batters, Surya included. The skipper got out to the pacers, like most of his fellow batters, in all three matches so far. England have mostly bowled short or hard length deliveries.

## Fans Chant Virat Kohli "Ko Bowling Do" During Delhi's Ranji Trophy Game

**Agencies :** Fans turned up in huge numbers at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium on Thursday as India star Virat Kohli made his domestic cricket comeback. It was a return after 12 years for Kohli, who without a surprise hogged immense limelight on the opening day of Delhi's Ranji Trophy match against Railways. Multiple videos are going viral on social media involving Kohli and one of them has the fans demanding the star to be given the task of bowling. The fans could not see the batting of Kohli on the opening day as Delhi captain Ayush Badoni won the toss and opted to bowl. Railways were bundled out for 241 and Delhi reached 41 for 1 in reply at stumps. As the fans were eagerly waiting to see Kohli in batting, they demanded him to roll his arms over. Kohli, who was fielding in the slips, didn't react to it as he was busy encouraging his bowlers. Upendra Yadav negated Delhi's early advantage with a resolute 95 to steer Uttar Pradesh to 241 on day one of their Ranji Trophy tie dominated by Virat Kohli's grand return to domestic red-ball cricket after 12 years. The pace trio of Navdeep Saini, Siddhant Sharma and Money Grewal exploited the early morning conditions to reduce Railways to 66 for five in the first session before Upendra and veteran spinner Karn Sharma (50 off 105) forged a 104-run stand for the sixth wicket.

## Khawaja slams maiden double ton as SL toil continues

**Agencies :** Usman Khawaja scored his maiden double-century in Test cricket with an unbeaten 204 at Lunch on Day 2 of the first Test in Galle. It is also the highest Test score by an Australian batter on Sri Lankan shores. Led by his monumental batting effort, Australia continued to dominate the Test as they plundered 145 runs in the session losing only the wicket of Steve Smith, who fell for 141. The hosts went to Lunch at 475/1. Khawaja and Smith merrily carried on from where they had left off on Day 1. The Sri Lankan spinners after bowling negative lines outside leg stump in the third session Day 1, went back to bowling outside off with the new ball. But the two batters were happy to knock it around and get their eye in once again as Khawaja quickly moved to 150. The batters were more aggressive against Nishan Peiris, not allowing him to settle, scoring frequent boundaries off him. Steve Smith danced down the track to loft a few boundaries over extra-cover before carving one away to the backward point fence off Jeffrey Vandersay. Sri Lanka missed a run-out chance of Khawaja after he had lazily wandered outside his crease. Sri Lanka picked up Smith in the first over after the drinks break. It was a very good set up by Vandersay who had gotten the first ball.

## Mumbai Indians owners win bid for 49% stake in Oval Invincibles

**Agencies :** Mumbai Indians owners Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) are set to buy a 49% stake in Oval Invincibles after winning a virtual auction on Thursday afternoon. RIL will enter into a period of exclusivity which will see them negotiate agreements with Surrey, the ECB and their financial advisors before completing the purchase. The winning bid was understood to value 100% of the franchise at £123 million, implying RIL will pay just over £60m for its 49% stake. The ECB declined to comment and are not expected to confirm successful bidders - or valuations - until next week. Surrey also declined to comment. ESPNcricinfo understands that RIL saw off competition from a Silicon Valley tech consortium (involving the chief executives of Google, Microsoft and Adobe), and private equity firm CVC. The Invincibles, two-time defending champions in the men's Hundred, are the first team to be sold in the final round of the ECB's sales process. The deal will see two heavyweights of their respective markets coming together: Mumbai Indians are widely seen as the most powerful IPL franchise, while Surrey are the richest English county club. The Invincibles will become the sixth team run by RIL, after Mumbai Indians (in both the IPL and WPL), MI New York (MLC), MI Cape Town (SA20) and MI Emirates (ILT20).

## "Has The Worst...": Virat Kohli Gets Brutal Reality Check As Steve Smith, Joe Root Pile Runs

**Agencies :** Steve Smith has regained his mojo in Test cricket, with the Australia batter smashing his 36th century in the format on Day 1 of the 1st Test against Sri Lanka in Galle. During the same knock, Smith, who is leading Australia in the absence of regular skipper Pat Cummins, became only the fourth Australian to breach the landmark of 10,000 Tests runs. Former India batter Aakash Chopra has lauded Smith, who now stands at 10,140 runs at an average of 56.33 in 115 Tests. Chopra pointed out that Smith now has five more Test centuries than Virat Kohli, despite the latter playing five more innings. "Smith has scored a century (against Sri Lanka). He has struck his 35th century in just 205 innings. (Joe) Root has scored 36 hundreds but he has played 278 innings. So if you look at it in terms of the strike rate, the number of innings he takes to score a century, then Steve Smith is ahead of Joe Root," said Chopra on his Youtube channel. Chopra also highlighted that Kohli now.