



# The Real Guardians of Punjab's Freedom

From Khalra's martyrdom to struggles in fields, villages and panchayats, the fight continues

## Summer News, Chandigarh :

Freedom does not simply mean liberation from foreign rule. Its true meaning lies in every citizen's right to live with dignity, express an opinion, ask questions and raise a voice against injustice. The Indian Constitution has placed equality, liberty, justice and dignity at the foundation of this freedom. In Punjab, those who have defended these values cannot be limited to the martyrs of the freedom movement. At different points in history, people have emerged who have taken the risk of standing against governments, social prejudices, economic inequality and injustice. Some paid with their lives, while others continue to work in villages, fields, panchayats, courts and public movements. Their methods may be different, but their objective is common—to make ordinary people aware of their rights and dignity. Human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra remains one of the strongest examples of the defence of constitutional values in Punjab. During a turbulent period, he documented cases related to alleged fake encounters, enforced disappearances and the cremation of unidentified bodies. His efforts were not limited to any particular community; they focused on state accountability and every citizen's right to life. Khalra disappeared in 1995, and his murder case subsequently came to light. His struggle raised before the country the question of whether civil rights could be ignored even in the name of combating terrorism and violence. Police officers found guilty in the case were also punished. Judicial proceedings related to matters associated with Khalra have continued in subsequent years. His wife, Paramjit Kaur Khalra, has also continued this struggle for justice for decades. She has raised the demand for documentation of missing persons and incidents from that period and for bringing the voices of affected families before the public. Her journey demonstrates that even after a person is martyred, the questions raised by that person can remain alive.

## Farmers' Movement: A Voice from the Fields

A major chapter in the struggle for democratic rights in Punjab is connected with farmers' movements. Farmer leaders such as Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Manjit Singh and Jagjit Singh Dallewal have consistently raised issues concerning agricultural policy, minimum support price, land and the economic security of farmers. In recent months too, farmer and labour organisations in Punjab have held protests against free trade agreements and policies related to agriculture. In August, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha and various trade unions also staged demonstrations at several places in the state against free trade agreements.

### A New Story of Change in Villages...

The protection of the values of freedom does not happen only through large movements. Across Punjab's villages, individuals and groups are working to transform society through education, healthcare, environmental protection, employment and greater participation of women. Simran, a sarpanch from Fatehpur village, is one such example. Through programmes aimed at strengthening women's role in rural leadership, she has been involved in education, waste management and sports activities for young people. Information about more than 17,000 women in rural Punjab becoming associated with such programmes has emerged. These women have taken leadership roles in areas including the environment, youth development, health and social problems affecting villages. This change is significant because women being elected to panchayats and women actually participating in decision-making are two different things.



### -Bathinda Girl Takes Responsibility at a Young Age...

Byant Kaur from Mehama Sarja village in Bathinda began social work during her teenage years. She worked to create awareness about sanitation, anaemia and drug abuse and helped connect women with self-help groups. According to available details, she has been active in organising women associated with 20 self-help groups around savings and income-generating opportunities. Her story shows that large positions or extensive resources are not always necessary to bring about change.

### Women Farmers Find Their Voice...

The farmers' movement has also brought the role of rural women in Punjab into greater public focus. Women farmer activists such as Jasbir Kaur Natt have worked to ensure that women are recognised not merely as members of farming families but as farmers in their own right. During the movement, women from Punjab brought their roles in the fields, families and protests into the public sphere. Stories of women farmers such as Amandeep Kaur also raised

questions about how the agrarian crisis affects women and the extent to which their labour in farming and rights over land are recognised.

### Sports Give Girls New Confidence...

Sports have become another important means of social change in rural Punjab. Girls such as Baljinder Kaur from Bor village have challenged social attitudes that traditionally did not give priority to sports for village daughters. She received training and participated in competitions at the district and state levels. The expansion of sports centres in rural areas has also improved access to sporting facilities for boys and girls. This year, the launch of Punjab's 1,000th rural sports centre was claimed. Its importance goes beyond creating a playing field.

### Starting a New Business at 71...

The story of 71-year-old Rashpal Kaur Sandhu from Nawanshahr offers another kind of inspiration. After living abroad for a long period, she returned to her village and started making natural soaps. Her unit, which produces soaps using local ingredients such as turmeric, mint and charcoal,

has become part of an effort to connect rural women with employment and entrepreneurship. Her journey challenges the belief that village women should remain confined to traditional domestic roles. In Punjab, nearly six lakh rural women are reported to be associated with self-help groups.

### Sanitation Workers' Struggle Is Also a Fight for Rights

The recent movement by sanitation workers in Barnala is also part of this wider picture. A large number of women workers raised demands related to wages, job security and regularisation. During a protest in July, an alleged police lathi-charge became an issue, following which the Scheduled Castes Commission and the Women's Commission also took cognisance of the incident. The movement raised an important question: Who will protect the labour and dignity of those who keep cities and towns clean?

### Village Women Emerging as Agents of Change

The expansion of women's leadership in rural Punjab is not confined to politics. Women are increasingly participating in self-help groups, environmental

protection, waste management, healthcare, education, sports and small businesses. In many places, women are also actively identifying village problems and helping implement solutions.

### The Real Test of Freedom...

The stories of these people are different from one another. Khalra lost his life fighting for human rights; Paramjit Kaur Khalra continued the struggle for justice; farmer leaders raised questions concerning agriculture and the rural economy; women farmers spoke up for recognition and equality; and village women created space for themselves in panchayats, education, healthcare, environmental protection and employment. It is not necessary to regard any of them as perfect or unquestionable heroes. In a democracy, people can disagree with an individual's views.

### A Message for the Next Generation...

The real guardians of Punjab's freedom are not only those whose names are recorded in history books. They also include people who provide children in villages with opportunities to study, help women become economically stronger, take girls onto sports fields, speak for the rights of farmers and workers, and have the courage to question those in power. The strongest way to preserve freedom is for citizens to defend not only their own rights but also the rights of others. Keeping the Constitution alive means taking its values beyond the pages of a book and into villages, fields, panchayats, schools, workplaces and streets. That is how the freedom for which generations of people in Punjab paid a price can remain alive.

Coffee table book on the Journalists Premier League unveiled; next edition to feature 16 teams in Jaipur, while a marathon for women journalists announced in Delhi

# JPL Creates a New Chapter New Dimension for Journalism

**Summer news, New Delhi :** A coffee table book documenting the Journalists Premier League (JPL), organised by the United

Press Club, was unveiled at the Constitution Club of India in Delhi on Wednesday. Rajiv Dutta, president of the Rajasthan Wrestling

Association and Officer on Special Duty to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, attended the ceremony as the chief guest. Organisers associated

with JPL, journalists and players representing the participating teams were also present. The event also marked the announcement of the

second edition of JPL. According to the organisers, eight teams had participated in the inaugural tournament, while the number will now be

increased to 16. The first tournament was held at cricket stadiums in Chandigarh and Panchkula, with the Rajasthan team emerging as the winner.

Captains of all eight teams that participated in the first tournament shared their experiences and recalled their memories of the competition.

## Next Edition to Be Held in Jaipur

Rajiv Dutta announced that the next edition of JPL would be organised in Jaipur. He said sporting activities provide journalists with a positive environment amid their busy and stressful professional lives. JPL, he said, is bringing journalists closer to one another while promoting healthy competition and team spirit. Dutta appreciated the initiative taken by United Press Club president Arshdeep Singh Samar and other office-bearers of the club. He said such activities are important for reducing mental stress in the demanding routine of journalists. He emphasised that JPL is not merely a cricket tournament but also a platform that strengthens cooperation, interaction and a sense of community among journalists.

**-Support for Families of Deceased Journalists...**

Dutta also appreciated the club's efforts to assist the families of deceased journalists. He recalled that he had visited Ludhiana in 2013 and met families of journalists who had passed away. He said journalists have no shortage of people around them during their lifetime. Politicians and people from different walks of life remain in regular contact with them. However, after a journalist dies, only a few people often remain concerned about the welfare of the

family left behind. In such circumstances, providing financial assistance to the families of deceased journalists is an example of social responsibility, he said. Dutta described the United Press Club's initiative as significant and assured the club of his support for such efforts in the future.

### **-Competition to Expand to 16 Teams**

The organisers said the number of participating teams would be doubled from eight to 16 in the second edition. This will provide more journalists and players associated with media organisations an opportunity to participate in the tournament. The captains of all eight teams present at the programme shared their experiences and discussed various aspects of the tournament. The organisers said efforts were being made to develop JPL into a common platform combining sports, entertainment and social support for the journalist community. Players representing the participating teams were also present at the event.

### **-Marathon for Women Journalists in Delhi**

The ceremony also saw the announcement of the country's first journalists' marathon exclusively for women journalists, to be organised in Delhi. Dutta said sporting activities associated with



journalists would not remain limited to cricket. A special event would be organised to encourage women journalists to participate in sports and fitness activities. He said prize money would also be provided to encourage participants in the marathon. The objective is to motivate women journalists to take part in fitness and sporting activities while maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle.

### **-Organisers Express Gratitude...**

United Press Club president Arshdeep Singh Samar, along with other office-bearers and members, expressed special gratitude to Rajiv Dutta for supporting JPL. The club said efforts to expand JPL and bring journalists together on a common platform would continue. The organisers expressed hope that the upcoming edition in Jaipur would be broader and attract greater partic-

ipation than the inaugural tournament.

### **-His Presence Added Dignity to the Event: Arshdeep Singh Samar...**

Arshdeep Singh Samar, captain of the Punjab Press Lions, said Rajiv Dutta's presence as the chief guest at the JPL coffee table book launch added dignity to the occasion. He expressed gratitude for Dutta's encouragement and guidance and congratulated the entire team on the successful launch of the book and the successful organisation of JPL.

### **-Made the Ceremony Memorable: Pradeep Kumar...**

Pradeep Kumar, captain of the Delhi Media Masters, said the unveiling of the JPL coffee table book was a proud occasion for the journalist community. He said Dutta's dignified presence and positive thoughts made the ceremony memorable. He

expressed gratitude for his support and encouragement and congratulated the entire team on the successful tournament.

### **-Support Important to JPL's Success: Mukesh Meena...**

Mukesh Meena, captain of the Rajasthan Media Royals, said preserving memories of the first tournament in the JPL coffee table book was a special experience for everyone associated with the competition. He said Dutta's participation added enthusiasm to the event and expressed gratitude for his support and encouragement.

### **-Boosted the Morale of Players: Mohit Prem Sharma...**

Mohit Prem Sharma, captain of the Himachal Media Warriors, said JPL had emerged as an excellent platform connecting journalists through sports and team spirit. He said Dutta's presence at the

book launch boosted the morale of all players. He congratulated the entire team on the successful organisation of JPL and appreciated the initiative.

### **-JPL Received New Energy Through Support: Rahul Kumar...**

Rahul Kumar, captain of the J&K Press Gladiators, said Dutta's confidence in and support for JPL had given the initiative new energy. He described the successful launch of the coffee table book as an important milestone in JPL's journey and thanked Dutta for attending the ceremony, supporting the initiative and encouraging the participants.

### **-JPL Has Connected Journalism with Sports: Ravi Kaliraman...**

Ravi Kaliraman, captain of the Haryana Press Panthers, said JPL had made an impressive effort to bring journalism, sports and team spirit

together. He said Dutta's dignified presence made the ceremony special and thanked him for his support and encouragement. He also congratulated the organisers on the successful launch of the coffee table book and the overall JPL initiative.

### **-Added to the Grandeur of the Ceremony: Varinder Rawat...**

Varinder Rawat, team head of the Chandigarh Press Strikers, said the launch of the JPL coffee table book was a celebration of the collective journey and achievements of journalists associated with the tournament. He said Dutta's presence enhanced the occasion and expressed gratitude for his support and good wishes. He congratulated the entire team on the successful organisation of JPL.

### **-Encouragement Has Given JPL a New Direction: Manoj Tripathi...**

Manoj Tripathi, captain of the UP Media Fighters, said JPL had brought journalists together on the sports field and set an example of healthy competition and camaraderie. He said Dutta's encouragement had been important to the journey of the tournament. Tripathi thanked him for attending the book launch and supporting JPL, while extending his best wishes for the success of the upcoming edition.

# BJP Revamps Strategy for 2027 Punjab Polls

Focus shifts from traditional urban base to rural voters as party prepares to contest all 117 seats independently

**Sumemr News Ludhiana, Chandigarh :** Ahead of the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made significant changes to its organisation and electoral strategy. The party has appointed senior Punjab leader Manpreet Singh Badal as national vice-president, former Rajasthan BJP president Satish Poonia as Punjab in-charge, and former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) strategist and Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak as national secretary. Kewal Singh Dhillon has already taken charge as the Punjab BJP president, becoming the party's first Jat Sikh state chief. Taken together, these changes indicate that the BJP is trying to move beyond its traditional urban support base and expand its influence among rural and Sikh voters. The party has also decided to prepare for an independent contest on all 117 Assembly seats, rather than depending on an alliance partner.

**Manpreet Badal gets national role :** *The appointment of Manpreet Singh Badal as national vice-president is considered significant in the context of Punjab politics. A prominent leader from the Malwa region, Badal has served as Punjab's finance minister and has experience in both the Shiromani Akali Dal and Congress before joining the BJP. His political background and familiarity with Punjab's social and electoral landscape could be useful to the BJP as it seeks to widen its support in the state. His elevation also gives the party a prominent Jat Sikh face at the national level. The move has a clear political message: the BJP wants to improve*

*its outreach to Jat Sikh voters. For a long time, the party has been seen largely as an urban and non-Sikh political force in Punjab. The appointment of Kewal Singh Dhillon as the first Jat Sikh president of the state unit, followed by Badal's elevation, points towards an effort to change that perception and strengthen the party's presence in the Malwa region and rural Punjab. However, having prominent community leaders alone will not guarantee electoral success. The BJP will also need a strong booth-level organisation, credible local leadership and a convincing position on rural issues.*

**Poonia gets organisational responsibility:** The appointment of Satish Poonia as Punjab in-charge is important from an organisational perspective. A former Rajasthan BJP president and senior party organiser, Poonia has now been given the responsibility of strengthening the BJP's election machinery in Punjab. His role is expected to involve coordination between the central leadership and the state unit, as well as preparation for the Assembly elections. His immediate challenge will be to help build an effective organisation down to the booth level. The BJP remained a junior partner to the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) for decades, which limited its independent organisational presence across many rural constituencies. After the alliance ended, the party has been attempting to establish its own political base.

**Experience of AAP's strategy :** The appointment of Sandeep Pathak is another important aspect of the BJP's organisational reshuffle. Pathak, a Rajya Sabha MP who joined the



BJP in April 2026 after leaving the AAP, had earlier played a key role in the AAP's election strategy in Punjab. He was closely associated with the party's organisational expansion and was regarded as one of its important strategists during the 2022 Punjab Assembly election. The AAP won 92 of Punjab's 117 Assembly seats in the 2022 election and formed the government. Pathak's experience of the AAP's campaign methods, booth management and voter outreach could therefore give the BJP an additional strategic perspective. His new responsibility, however, is at the national level and should not be viewed solely through the Punjab lens. Even so, his previous experience with the AAP could be particularly relevant when the BJP prepares to challenge the ruling party in the 2027 election.

**BJP prepares for all 117 seats :** The BJP has begun preparations to contest all 117 Assembly constituencies independently. Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon has made the party's position clear, while the central leadership has instructed the state organisation to prepare for an independent electoral battle. The decision marks a major shift from the BJP's

earlier dependence on the SAD alliance. Contesting all seats will allow the party to build its own organisation and identify candidates in every constituency. It will also give the BJP greater freedom to develop its own campaign and political agenda. But the strategy comes with challenges. Finding strong candidates, building election machinery and mobilising resources across 117 constituencies will not be easy, particularly in rural areas where the party still lacks influential local faces in several places.

**2024 vote share provides hope :** The BJP's strategy is also based on the vote share it secured in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The party contested all 13 parliamentary seats in Punjab independently. Although it failed to win a single seat, its vote share rose to around 18.5 per cent, its highest-ever in the state. BJP candidates also finished first in 24 Assembly segments spread across several parliamentary constituencies. This performance gave the party confidence that it could expand its vote base without an alliance. However, translating a Lok Sabha vote share into Assembly seats is a different challenge. Assembly elections are

more heavily influenced by local candidates, caste and community equations, constituency-level issues and booth management. The BJP's challenge will therefore be to convert its broader vote share into concentrated support in individual Assembly constituencies. If it succeeds, the increase in vote share could translate into a significant rise in seats. If its votes remain scattered, the electoral gains could remain limited despite a higher overall percentage.

**Rural Punjab remains the biggest challenge :** The farmer issue remains one of the BJP's most difficult political challenges in Punjab. The farm laws and the farmers' movement created a deep political distance between the party and sections of the rural electorate. The BJP will have to increase its direct engagement with farmers and address issues such as cultivation costs, crop diversification, minimum support price, rural employment and irrigation. Merely highlighting central government schemes may not be enough; the party will also need clear positions on Punjab-specific concerns. This challenge is particularly important in the Malwa region, which has considerable political significance. The BJP's decision to appoint Kewal Singh Dhillon as state

president and Manpreet Badal to a senior national position indicates its effort to strengthen its presence in the region. The party will have to balance the interests and aspirations of Jat Sikhs, Dalits, OBCs and urban Hindu voters to create a broader electoral coalition.

**AAP and Congress both in BJP's sights :** The BJP's strategy is not limited to defeating the AAP. The party is also seeking to make inroads into the Congress vote base. If the AAP and Congress contest the 2027 election separately, a division of anti-incumbency votes could create opportunities for the BJP, particularly in constituencies where it has a vote base of around 15 to 20 per cent and the contest becomes triangular. However, if either the AAP or Congress succeeds in consolidating a large share of the anti-incumbency vote, the BJP's task will become more difficult. The party will therefore need to build an independent social and political coalition instead of relying only on opposition to the state government.

**Organisation will determine electoral strength :** The BJP's latest changes bring together leaders with different political and organisational experiences. Manpreet Badal provides a prominent Punjab-based Jat Sikh face and political experience. Satish Poonia brings organisational and election-management experience, while Sandeep Pathak brings first-hand knowledge of the AAP's strategy and organisational methods. Kewal Singh Dhillon, meanwhile, has been given the task of leading the state organisation. The success of this

strategy will depend heavily on coordination among these leaders. The party will also have to maintain a balance between its long-time workers and leaders who have joined from other political parties. In Punjab, a strategy designed at the central level can succeed only when it is effectively implemented by local workers and supported by credible regional leaders. The BJP's emphasis on booth-level strengthening and household outreach during its recent organisational meetings suggests that this ground-level expansion is now a central part of its election plan.

**What could change in 2027? :** The organisational changes could make the 2027 Punjab election more clearly triangular or multi-cornered. If the BJP succeeds in expanding its rural acceptability and combines Jat Sikh support with backing among Dalits, OBCs and urban Hindu voters, it could emerge as a serious challenger in a number of constituencies. The BJP's objective is therefore not merely to form a government in 2027. It is also trying to establish an independent and sustainable political base in Punjab. Candidate selection, booth-level expansion, engagement with farmers and the party's stand on local issues will determine whether the new strategy can convert organisational changes into electoral gains. The BJP has acquired a new organisational structure, but its ultimate success will depend on what happens on the ground—whether its workers can reach voters, whether its new social outreach gains credibility and whether the party can turn its growing vote share into Assembly seats.

After the Special Intensive Revision, the status of lakhs of names has changed

# Will Punjab's New Voter List Change the Electoral Equation in 2027?

## Summer News, Chandigarh :

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Punjab, ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections, has triggered a fresh discussion over the direction of electoral politics in the state. After the completion of door-to-door verification of voters and the matching of their details with old records, the draft electoral roll has now been published. The impact of the exercise could be particularly visible in large districts such as Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jalandhar and Patiala, where the population is large and people frequently move from one place to another for employment, business and education.

The Election Commission had initially started the process of distributing and collecting enumeration forms through door-to-door visits for the SIR in Punjab. The schedule was subsequently revised, with door-to-door verification by Booth Level Officers being carried out until August 3, while the draft electoral roll was published on August 13. Eligible voters have now been given an opportunity to file claims and objections for inclusion, deletion or correction of details in the electoral roll until September 12. The final electoral roll is scheduled to be published on October 12. The electoral significance of districts such as Ludhiana and Amritsar is not limited merely to the number of voters. As major industrial, commercial and tourism centres, these cities have a substantial population of people who have come from other dis-



tricts and states. Changes in permanent addresses, families shifting to another city or people staying away from their registered place of residence for long periods make it more difficult to keep electoral rolls updated.

Before the SIR, voters in Punjab were mapped against older records. Their current electoral details were matched with the 2003 electoral roll. If a person's name could not be found in the old records, an attempt was made to establish the relationship through the name of the person's father, mother, grandfather or another eligible family member. The objective of this system was to establish a link between the old and current records.

### Challenge in Ludhiana :

Updating the electoral roll in a rapidly expanding urban area such as Ludhiana is a relatively difficult task for the administra-

tion. Under the special SIR arrangement for the district, Booth Level Officers and supervisors were deployed. The district administration separately provided information related to the SIR programme, forms and documents that voters were required to submit.

During the earlier mapping exercise, Ludhiana had also recorded relatively lower progress compared with some other districts of the state. According to figures available in May, around 73.64 per cent of voters in Ludhiana had been mapped with the 2003 electoral roll, while the corresponding figure for Amritsar was 88.29 per cent. Mapping and door-to-door verification were subsequently taken forward in the later stages of the exercise.

### Important changes in Amritsar too :

Amritsar, apart from being a border district, is a ma-

ajor centre of religious and tourism-related activities. Its population is diverse, with a large number of voters spread across both rural and urban areas. Therefore, matching current details with old records and verifying present residence are important for maintaining the accuracy of the electoral roll. The Amritsar district administration has been making electoral rolls available for different elections. After the SIR, the most important task for citizens is to personally check their names and polling station details in the draft electoral roll. If the name of an eligible voter has been left out, it will be necessary to file a claim within the prescribed period.

### Deletion of a name is not the final decision :

The absence of a name from the draft electoral roll during the SIR does not, by itself, mean that

the person has been finally deprived of the right to vote. The Election Commission's system provides an opportunity to file claims and objections. Voters can search for their names, check the status of applications and, where necessary, file an appeal. For newly eligible voters, Form 6 is available for inclusion of names. Form 7 is used for deletion of a name, while Form 8 is meant for correction of details in the electoral roll.

### Political parties keeping a close watch :

Changes in the electoral roll will also have a direct impact on political parties. Urban voters have continued to play an important role in Punjab's politics. In areas such as Ludhiana and Amritsar, the total number of voters, addition of new voters and the status of voters who have shifted from one place to another could influence electoral strategies. Polit-

ical parties may therefore step up verification of electoral rolls through their workers at the booth level. However, it would not be appropriate to directly link changes in the electoral roll to the advantage or disadvantage of any particular political party.

The stated objective of the Election Commission is to update the electoral roll, remove the names of deceased or permanently shifted voters, include newly eligible citizens and correct erroneous entries. The Chief Electoral Officer had also clarified that the purpose was not to remove an eligible voter merely because the person had not been mapped to the old records.

### Responsibility now rests with voters :

The most important next step in the SIR process is the active participation of citizens. Voters should not assume that because their names have

appeared in an earlier electoral roll, they will automatically continue to remain there. It is important to check the name, address, age and polling station details in the draft electoral roll.

In case of an error or if a name is missing, a claim or objection can be filed until September 12. The final electoral roll for Punjab will be published in October. Preparations for the 2027 Assembly elections will intensify thereafter.

The SIR, therefore, is not merely an administrative exercise but a foundation for democratic participation. The more accurate and inclusive the electoral roll is, the stronger public confidence in the electoral process will be. In large districts such as Ludhiana and Amritsar, the real challenge now is to ensure that while fake, duplicate or incorrect entries are removed, no genuine and eligible voter is deprived of the right to vote.

# Don't Delay Tests Over Radiation Fears

In an exclusive interaction, radiologist Dr Balreet addresses misconceptions related to X-rays, ultrasound and breast cancer screening

**Payal Mohindra, Shimla :** Patients often have concerns about radiation when it comes to diagnostic tests such as X-rays, ultrasound, CT scans and MRI. At times, this fear leads people to delay necessary tests despite a doctor's recommendation. The Summer News spoke exclusively to radiologist Dr Balreet on the issue. According to her, not every imaging technique involves radiation, and patients should rely on the advice of a qualified doctor rather than deciding on their own which test they need. She also discussed breast cancer screening, awareness among women, diagnostic tests during pregnancy and precautions related to MRI.

**Question:** The moment people hear the names X-ray, ultrasound, CT and MRI, they become worried about radiation. Are these tests safe?

**Answer:** First of all, it is important to understand that not every test involves ionizing radiation. Ultrasound and MRI do not use this type of radiation. X-rays and CT scans do involve radiation. CT scans involve greater radiation exposure than X-rays, which is why they are not recommended without a medical need. However, if a doctor has advised a CT scan or X-ray to correctly identify a patient's condition, it is not appropriate to postpone the test simply because of fear of radiation. Timely identification of a disease is more important.

**Question:** How can an ordinary patient understand whether they need an ultrasound, CT scan or MRI?

**Answer:** Patients should not make this decision themselves. The choice of test depends on the part of the body in-

involved, the symptoms and the suspected disease. Every diagnostic test has different indications. Choosing a test on the basis of information found on the internet, Google or social media can be harmful. Patients should consult a qualified doctor and undergo the test recommended by the doctor.

**Question:** Radiologists and technicians work around such machines regularly. Is there a risk to them?

**Answer:** Where personnel are required to remain in a room during X-ray-based procedures, prescribed safety protocols are followed. Lead shields and other protective equipment are used. Considering the occupational risks associated with radiation, regulations are quite strict today. Unnecessary exposure should be avoided as much as possible.

This is why, under normal circumstances, a patient's attendant is kept outside the X-ray or CT area. In special circumstances, if someone has to stay with a child, protective equipment is provided.

**Question:** When should women start getting mammography or breast examinations?

**Answer:** Breast imaging is not limited to just one type of examination. It may include sonomammography, digital mammography and, when required, MRI-based examinations. According to Dr Balreet, women may consider having at least one baseline breast examination after the age of 40. Women who have a first-degree relative, such as a mother, sister or daughter, with a history of breast or ovarian cancer may require a different screening plan. In such

cases, doctors may recommend starting screening earlier, depending on the family history and the woman's age.

**Question:** What can women do themselves for early detection of breast cancer?

**Answer:** The most important thing is to know your own body. A woman should know what her breasts normally look and feel like, including their size, skin and nipples. If there is a sudden lump, inward turning of the nipple, dimpling of the skin, or a change in colour or texture, an examination should be done. One should not wait for pain to appear. Not every change means cancer, so there is no need to panic either. The right approach is to identify any change and consult a doctor in time.

**Question:** What is the most important precaution

while undergoing an MRI scan?

**Answer:** An MRI machine has a very powerful magnetic field. Therefore, coins, keys, jewellery and other metallic objects must be removed before the examination. This is also why patients are asked to change their clothes at many centres. If a person has any implant, medical device or other metal inside the body, this information should be given to the staff in advance. Following safety protocols is extremely important.

**Question:** What should be kept in mind regarding ultrasound, X-rays and CT scans during pregnancy?

**Answer:** Ultrasound is commonly used during pregnancy, and doctors may prescribe it again when necessary. Additional caution is taken in the case of X-rays and CT scans. If a woman has

missed her period or there is a possibility of pregnancy, she must inform the doctor and the diagnostic centre before undergoing an X-ray. When there is a specific medical need, the doctor assesses the benefits and potential risks before making a decision.

**Question:** Does having dense breasts mean that the risk of cancer is very high?

**Answer:** Dense breasts are not abnormal breasts by themselves. They contain a higher amount of fibroglandular tissue. According to Dr Balreet, it is not correct to immediately assume that cancer is present simply because the breasts are dense. In some cases, a different imaging approach may be required, and a doctor may recommend sonomammography along with digital mammography. Therefore, instead of

becoming frightened after seeing the report, patients should seek expert medical advice.

**Question:** What is the most important thing patients should remember about diagnostic tests?

**Answer:** The most important thing is to have the right test, at the right time, on the advice of the right doctor. Both trying to diagnose a disease oneself and avoiding a necessary test because of the influence of social media are inappropriate. In some serious conditions, a patient may need more than one scan within a short period. In such situations, doctors make decisions after considering the seriousness of the disease. Patients should choose a qualified specialist, follow the appropriate protocol and should not delay a necessary diagnostic test because of unnecessary fear.



# Chandigarh-Mohali Border Protests Disrupt Traffic

*Qaumi Insaaf Morcha's long-running protest seeking the release of Sikh prisoners continues*

## Summer News, CHANDIGARH :

The Chandigarh-Mohali border has once again emerged as a centre of law-and-order and political and social tension. Following the confrontation between supporters of the Qaumi Insaaf Morcha and the police on Independence Day, the impact of the issue is no longer confined to the protest site. Heavy security, restrictions on roads and attempts by protesters to move towards Chandigarh have affected traffic across the Tricity. At the same time, the Morcha has indicated that it intends to intensify its agitation by calling for a Punjab bandh.

The issue is primarily related to the release of Sikh prisoners whom the Morcha refers to as "Bandi Singhs". Protesters claim that several prisoners have completed the sentences awarded to them but continue to remain in jail. The Morcha has been demanding for a long time that governments take decisions regarding their release, parole and related cases. The protest over the issue has been continuing near YPS Chowk in Mohali since January 7, 2023. Having continued for more than three years, the protest has turned the Chandigarh-Mohali border into a permanent centre of agitation.

On Independence Day, the Morcha had called for a march towards the residence of the Governor of Punjab, namely Lok Bhawan. Citing security reasons, the administration installed multiple layers of barricading at the Chandigarh-Mohali border and did not allow protesters to enter the city. Police initially tried to engage with the protesters and prevent them from moving forward. When the protesters began advancing and attempted to remove the barricades, the situation became tense.

## Police: Protesters Cannot Be Allowed to Enter Chandigarh

*The main challenge before the police was to prevent the protesters from entering Chandigarh while also ensuring the safety of Independence Day programmes and the movement of ordinary citizens in the city. The administration deployed a large number of police personnel in the city in view of the protest. According to reports, around 3,000 police personnel were deployed for security arrangements. Surveillance was also increased at sensitive locations and major roads apart from the border area.*

*The police maintain that maintaining public order is their responsibility and that no group can be allowed to forcibly cross barricades and enter the city. The administration was also concerned that the entry of a large crowd into Chandigarh could affect traffic, security arrangements and Independence Day programmes. Therefore, barricading and police deployment had been increased in advance on several routes. Following the confrontation, police began the process of registering cases and identifying people allegedly involved in the violence. Some reports have mentioned action against 21 people, including Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) chief Simranjit Singh Mann and his son Eman Singh Mann. Police have alleged that some protesters attempted to breach the security cordon and attack police personnel.*

**Morcha: Governments Should Adopt a Human-**



### itarian and Legal Approach...

Leaders of the Morcha say that their movement is not aimed at serving the interests of any political party but is connected with the rights of Sikh prisoners who have remained in jail for a long time. Their argument is that governments should adopt a humanitarian and legal approach in cases involving prisoners who have completed the sentences awarded by courts. The protesters have also repeatedly questioned why different prisoners are allegedly treated differently in matters relating to parole and release. The Morcha has linked the issue with the broader religious and human rights discourse in Punjab. Several farmers', religious and social organisations have extended support to the movement from time to time. In July this year too, a rail blockade was organised in Punjab over the release of Bandi Singhs. The protest in Sirhind affected the movement of more than 13 trains on the Delhi-Amritsar-Jammu railway route. This shows

that the impact of the movement is no longer restricted to Mohali.

### Double Challenge Before the Government

The Punjab government also faces a difficult situation in the matter. On one hand, there is political and social pressure over the demands of the protesters, while on the other, maintaining law and order is its constitutional responsibility. In every case involving the release of prisoners, the respective jurisdictions of the prison authorities, courts, the state government and the Central government may be different. Therefore, it is not possible for the state government to take a direct decision in every case. This is why the issue of Bandi Singhs has remained linked for years with the question of responsibility between the Centre and the Punjab government.

Several Sikh organisations, including the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, have also raised the issue. Recently, the SGPC submitted a mem-

orandum to the Punjab Governor addressed to the President, seeking the release of nine Sikh prisoners. The list included the names of prisoners whom the committee claims have spent longer periods in jail than their life sentences.

### Immediate Impact on Traffic

The long-running protest at the Chandigarh-Mohali border has its most direct impact on ordinary citizens. Due to security arrangements, vehicles have to be diverted through alternative routes around YPS Chowk, Sectors 52-53, the Matour barrier and surrounding roads. During major protest programmes, additional pressure develops on the main routes connecting Mohali with Chandigarh, and traffic congestion can also spread to internal roads. In the past, barricading on Chandigarh's entry and exit routes during marches by the Morcha increased traffic pressure on internal roads in Mohali. Office-goers, students, patients and people associated with essential

services face the greatest inconvenience in such situations. The geographical relationship between Chandigarh and Mohali makes the problem more serious. A large number of people travel between the two cities every day for employment, business, education and healthcare. Therefore, even a traffic disruption lasting a few hours at the border can have an impact several kilometres away.

### Border Has Become a Flashpoint Before

This is not the first time that the Qaumi Insaaf Morcha and the police have come face to face. In February 2023, a violent confrontation also took place at the Sector 52-53 border. At that time, police said that several police personnel were injured and police vehicles were damaged. An FIR was registered and several people were named in the case. Later, a reward was also announced for information leading to the identification of some of the accused. In January 2025, a confrontation again took place between police and protesters during a march towards Chandigarh to mark the completion of two years of the Morcha's protest. Police used tear gas and water cannons, and reports also emerged of some police personnel being injured. Security was increased at several entry points to Chandigarh at the time, and traffic was affected. These incidents make it clear that the present dispute has not emerged suddenly. The long-running protest, repeated at-

tempts to march towards Chandigarh and police barricading have increased mistrust between the two sides. Therefore, merely increasing police deployment before every protest cannot be considered a permanent solution.

### Solution Possible Only Through Dialogue

The current situation indicates that the problem at the Chandigarh-Mohali border cannot be resolved merely by increasing barricading or deploying more police personnel. The legal status of the cases involving Bandi Singhs differs from one prisoner to another. The governments and institutions concerned will therefore need to clarify the position in each case and explore a path of dialogue.

The protesting side also has a responsibility to present its demands peacefully and ensure that public property and police personnel are not harmed. Most importantly, an effective mechanism for regular dialogue between the two sides needs to be established. If a clear roadmap can be prepared through discussions on the legal status of pending cases, parole, release and jurisdiction, the long-standing tension can be reduced. For now, the proposed Punjab bandh on August 21 and the security preparations leading up to it will indicate whether the dispute moves towards dialogue or whether the Chandigarh-Mohali border once again becomes a centre of confrontation.

# Chandigarh to Hike Littering Fines

## MC approves draft Solid Waste Management Bye-Laws-2026; proposal to increase user charges rejected

### Summer News, Chandigarh, :

TChandigarh is preparing to tighten its waste management system. The draft Solid Waste Management Bye-Laws-2026 approved by the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation make segregation of waste at source mandatory for households, shops, institutions and bulk waste generators.

Violators will face higher fines compared with the existing system. After approving the draft, the Municipal Corporation has now invited suggestions and objections from the public and other stakeholders within 15 days. The final draft will be prepared after reviewing the responses, following which the bye-laws will be

notified. Under the proposed rules, households and other waste generators will have to segregate waste into four categories. Wet or biodegradable waste, dry and recyclable waste, domestic hazardous waste and sanitary waste will have to be kept separately. A colour-coded four-bin system has

been proposed for this purpose. Mixing segregated waste again during collection and transportation will also be prohibited. Bulk waste generators will additionally have to keep horticulture and construction waste separate. The most significant feature of the draft is the proposal for stricter financial penalties for

violations. In serious cases, fines for bulk waste generators and resident welfare associations could go up to Rs 1.5 lakh. For households, shops and other establishments, penalties will depend on the nature of the violation. A fine of Rs 400 has been proposed for residential areas where waste is not segregated into the

four prescribed categories before being handed over for collection. Littering in public places could attract a fine of Rs 500. The same penalty has been proposed for spitting paan or gutka. Open defecation or urination in a public place could attract a penalty of Rs 200. Dumping waste into water sources could result in a fine

of Rs 25,000, while illegal dumping of waste could attract a penalty of Rs 15,000. Street vendors who fail to properly manage waste could face a fine of Rs 1,000. Large commercial establishments such as hotels, restaurants and shopping malls could face penalties of up to Rs 1 lakh for violations.

## Proposal to Increase User Charges Rejected

During discussions on the new bye-laws, the Municipal Corporation House did not approve the proposed increase in waste collection user charges. The draft had proposed higher charges for houses ranging from smaller properties to larger residences. A monthly charge of Rs 100 had been proposed for houses measuring up to two marlas, Rs 200 for houses measuring between two and 10 marlas, Rs 400 for properties between 10 marlas and one kanal, Rs 500 for properties between one and two kanals and Rs 700 for houses measuring more than two kanals.

A proposal to increase the monthly charge for street vendors from Rs 50 to Rs 100 was also not accepted by the House.

Following this decision, the proposed additional monthly burden on ordinary households will not be implemented for the time being. However, other provisions related to user charges remain part of the draft, and any changes in the final bye-laws will be decided after the public consultation process.

### Responsibility for Street Vendors and Businesses :

The proposed rules will not be limited to house-



holds. Street vendors will have to keep separate containers for food waste, disposable plates, cups, boxes, wrappers, fruit and vegetable waste and other waste generated through their businesses. They will have to hand over the waste at locations or to vehicles designated by the Municipal Corporation. Separate provisions have also been proposed for hair salons, beauty parlours and similar establishments. Human hair and other biodegradable waste will have to be stored separately, while

used blades and other hazardous waste will have to be collected separately and handed over to an authorised collector. Registration, clean premises, scientific storage of waste and maintenance of records have also been proposed as requirements for scrap dealers and waste traders.

### Greater Responsibility for Bulk Waste Generators :

The rules also expand the scope of bulk waste generators. These may include large residential complexes, institutions,

hotels, hospitals, commercial establishments and other premises where the quantity of waste generated is substantial. Such establishments will be required to register, segregate waste at source, arrange for scientific processing of biodegradable waste and maintain relevant records. Under the earlier proposal, criteria such as a built-up area of 20,000 square metres or more, consumption of 40,000 litres of water per day or generation of 100 kilograms of waste per day were to be used

for identifying a bulk waste generator. The change is significant because a substantial portion of the waste generated by large residential complexes, markets and institutions can be segregated and processed at source. This could help reduce pressure on the city's waste disposal system.

### Fines Could Increase Every Year :

The draft also provides for a five per cent annual increase in fines and administrative charges. Similarly, a five per cent annual increase in user

charges was included in the draft. However, the proposal to increase user charges has been rejected by the House during the current process. Some relief has also been proposed for consumers who make advance payments. The Municipal Corporation's objective is not merely to collect fines but also to reduce the quantity of waste, promote recycling and reduce pressure on waste disposal facilities. At the Central level too, new Solid Waste Management Rules-2026 have been implemented, under which local bodies are required to prepare their systems accordingly. The Chandigarh MC has also made the Solid Waste Management Rules-2026 document available on its website.

### Now It Is the Public's Turn :

Before giving final shape to the approved draft, the Municipal Corporation has invited suggestions from citizens. During the 15-day period, residents, market associations, RWAs, street vendors, institutions and other stakeholders can submit their objections or suggestions. The responses will then be reviewed before the final draft is prepared. The consultation process is important because a major part of the proposed rules is directly

connected with the daily habits of ordinary citizens. Segregating waste into four bins, following the prescribed collection system and avoiding littering in public places will be effective only when the Municipal Corporation's collection system is equally regular and reliable.

### Rules Must Be Backed by an Effective System :

The proposed bye-laws increase responsibility on citizens and businesses, but the role of the Municipal Corporation will be equally important for successful implementation. Without adequate arrangements for collecting different categories of waste, regular collection, monitoring of sanitation workers and quick resolution of complaints, merely imposing fines is unlikely to produce the desired results.

Attention is now focused on the 15-day period for public suggestions and the final bye-laws that will be prepared thereafter. If practical difficulties faced by citizens are taken into account while implementing the rules, and the waste collection system is strengthened at the same time, the four-bin segregation system could bring a significant change to Chandigarh's waste management and cleanliness system.

# Escalators and new facilities to be developed at a cost of Rs 6.45 crore

## Easier Access for Devotees at Mansa Devi Temple

### Summer News, Panchkula :

A redevelopment plan costing around Rs 6.45 crore has been prepared to improve the movement and facilities for devotees at the famous Mata Mansa Devi Temple in Panchkula, Haryana. The project of the Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP) includes escalators, a new entrance lobby and main gate, improved access routes and several new facilities for devotees. The objective of the project is to make movement easier amid the pressure of crowds in the temple complex and

particularly facilitate access to the shrine for elderly and differently abled devotees. Tenders for the project have already been invited, and bids can be submitted until August 26. Once the work begins, it has been targeted for completion within nine months. One of the most important features of the plan is the installation of an escalator from the parking area to the temple's Darbar. It will be constructed alongside the existing staircase so that devotees have an additional option for moving up and down. A large number of stairs have to be climbed to reach



the temple. The escalator is therefore expected to provide

particular relief to senior citizens, differently abled

devotees and families visiting with children. According to

HSVP officials, the escalator will run parallel to the existing staircase route.

The redevelopment plan also proposes a new entrance lobby and main gate for the temple. Improvement work will also be undertaken around Shakti Chowk and along the road leading to the temple. The objective is not merely to create new structures but to organise the movement of devotees within and around the temple complex more effectively. This could help manage crowds during major religious events and occasions such as Navratri.

### Water ATMs and Other Facilities

The facilities proposed for devotees include water ATMs, new stairs, a corridor leading to the temple, a place of worship and a dome structure. Beautification and protective works will also be carried out along with these facilities. Decorative lighting and landscaping are planned for the remaining portion of Shakti Chowk. The aim is to make the area around the temple more organised and attractive. Several development projects have already been undertaken at the Mansa Devi Temple complex. Construction of a new building for the Sanskrit College is currently under way, while a new corridor is being developed to enhance the grandeur of the temple. The proposed corridor will include lift and escalator facilities. Renovation work is also under way at the Kali Mata Temple in Kalka and the Chandi Mata Temple in Chandi Mandir.

**Major Plan for Drain Improvement...**  
Development work related to basic facilities around the temple is



not limited to the temple complex itself. The Panchkula Metropolitan Development Authority has approved a Rs 95.42-crore plan for the improvement and beautification of two rainwater drains passing through the city. The plan also includes a water channel route of around 5.60 kilometres running from the Mansa Devi Temple through Rajiv-Indira Colony to the Punjab border. The

project proposes facilities such as pedestrian and cycling tracks along the drains, lighting, plantation, bridges and safety nets to prevent waste from entering the water channels. The need for the project is considered important because problems such as accumulation of dirty water, dumping of garbage and foul smell in the rainwater drains around the temple have been reported from time

to time. According to a report that emerged in 2026, complaints had also been raised about waterlogging, garbage and unhygienic conditions around the main approach road to the temple. The contract for the Rs 95.42-crore drain improvement project was subsequently awarded, and preparations were made to begin the work. **Convenience for Devotees, Along**

**with Challenges...**  
A large number of devotees visit the Mansa Devi Temple throughout the year, while the crowd increases several times during festivals such as Navratri. Therefore, the success of the new facilities will not depend only on completion of construction. Their regular maintenance, cleanliness, security and crowd management will also be important. According to official

information from the temple administration, the complex remains open from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. during the summer, while the morning and evening aartis are held at their scheduled times. If the facilities proposed under the Rs 6.45-crore redevelopment plan are completed within the targeted period, devotees visiting the temple could have a more convenient experience from entry to darshan. However,

timely completion of the larger projects related to surrounding roads, drainage and cleanliness will be equally important. Coordinated completion of these projects could help develop the temple complex and its surrounding area as an integrated pilgrimage zone, with better access, cleaner surroundings, improved crowd movement and greater convenience for devotees.