



Land Approvals Slow Bharatmala Progress

3,421-km network across Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh

Arshdeep Singh Samar, Chandigarh :

The first phase of the Bharatmala project, launched with the objective of creating a faster and better road connectivity network across the country, continues to face several hurdles. In the network passing through Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, some important stretches have already been completed. However, several projects are running behind schedule due to issues such as land acquisition, environmental clearances, shifting of utility services, removal of encroachments, farmers' protests and contractors' performance. The Centre has now set a target of completing the first phase of the Bharatmala project by 2028-29. The Government of India approved the first phase of the Bharatmala project in 2017 for a total length of 34,800 km at an estimated cost of Rs 5.35 lakh crore. According to information provided in Parliament in July 2026, projects covering 26,425 km had been awarded across the country by May 2026, of which 22,709 km had been completed. This meant that 3,716 km was still under construction. Expenditure on the project had reached Rs 5,63,779 crore by June 30, 2026. Since November 2023, approval of new projects of Bharatmala has been stopped, and the focus is now on completing projects that have already been approved. A total network of 3,421 km has been identified under Bharatmala across Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Projects covering 3,029 km have been awarded. By May 2026, construction of 2,188 km had been completed, while 841 km remained under construction. The figures show that progress has not been uniform across the four states. Haryana is in a relatively better position, while a substantial length in Punjab is still under construction. In Haryana, projects covering 1,058 km have been awarded under Bharatmala. Of this, 1,011 km had been completed and 47 km was under construction.

Land Acquisition Biggest Challenge in Punjab

Land availability has long been one of the major obstacles facing several Bharatmala projects in Punjab. The issue has affected important corridors such as the Ludhiana-Bathinda Expressway and the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway. Work on two packages of the Ludhiana-Bathinda project was scheduled to begin in 2022 and was targeted for completion by August 2025, but the work was stalled due to the non-availability of land. The project was later given fresh momentum after land became available. The Ludhiana-Bathinda route is around 75.5 km long and is being developed as a six-lane road. The project aims to speed up travel between Ludhiana and Bathinda while strengthening connectivity along the economic corridor. The land issue caused a prolonged delay in the start of construction. The example shows that even after a project has been approved and awarded, failure to make land available on time can affect the entire construction schedule. The Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Greenfield Expressway is another major example of delays. The approximately 670-km-long route is being developed to provide better connectivity between Delhi, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, while also linking important religious and tourism centres such as Amritsar and Katra. The project schedule has been affected several times.

Farmer Protests and Other Hurdles in Haryana...

The completion of 1,011 km out of the total 1,058 km awarded in Haryana reflects the state's relatively better position. Despite this, some important projects are running behind schedule. Recent government and project-level information has cited land issues, farmers'



protests, restrictions on tree felling, rainfall, bans on mining and other local issues among the reasons for delays. In some projects, railway clearances and demands for additional structures have also contributed to extensions of the timelines.

The Karnal Eastern Bypass is one such example. It is being developed under Bharatmala with the objective of reducing traffic pressure within the city and on National Highway-44. The project was targeted for completion by August 2025, but work was affected by restrictions imposed under the Graded Response Action Plan and farmers' protests. By June 2026, around 95 per cent of the work had been completed, and the remaining work was expected to be completed by September 2026.

Farmers had raised the issue of the absence of service roads on both sides of the bypass. During a protest in February 2026, construction work was also stopped. This makes it clear that completing the main highway alone is not sufficient; local connectivity roads, entry points and exits associated

with the highway also need to be completed on time.

Different Challenges in the Hill States...

The nature of projects in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir is different from that in the plains. Hilly terrain, tunnels, bridges, slopes and difficult weather conditions make construction more complex. By May 2026, 117 km of the 167 km awarded in Himachal Pradesh and 179 km of the 251 km awarded in Jammu and Kashmir had been completed. Work was continuing on 50 km and 72 km respectively in the two states.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the importance of road projects is not limited to transportation. Better road connectivity is important for tourism, local businesses and access to remote areas, as well as for strategic requirements. In such regions, weather and geographical conditions have a significant impact on project costs and timelines.

Multiple Reasons Behind Delays...

According to the Centre, there is no single reason for delays in national highway projects, including those under Bharatma-

la. Land acquisition is among the most significant problems. Other factors include statutory and environmental clearances, shifting electricity, water and other utility services, removal of encroachments, law-and-order situations, availability of construction materials and minerals, and weak performance by contractors or concessionaires. The Covid-19 pandemic and heavy rainfall have also been included among unforeseen factors.

These hurdles affect more than just project timelines. An extended construction period can increase costs, while incomplete routes force people to depend on alternative roads. In several places, traffic management becomes a challenge because of ongoing construction.

Government Measures and Focus on the 2026 Targets...

The Centre has increased the use of the 'Bhoomi Rashi' portal to speed up the land acquisition process. The 'PARIVESH' portal has also been improved to expedite environmental and forest clearances. An online system has been introduced for ap-

proving General Arrangement Drawings for railway-related overbridges and underbridges. In addition, review meetings are being held at the Centre and state levels to address project-specific bottlenecks. The government now faces a two-fold challenge. On the one hand, several stretches targeted for completion in 2026 have to be completed within the revised timelines. On the other, the remaining work under the first phase of Bharatmala has to be completed by 2028-29. With 841 km still under construction across the four states, the next two to three years will be crucial.

Impact on Economy and Connectivity...

The objective of these Bharatmala corridors is not merely to connect cities. The project seeks to reduce freight travel time, connect industrial centres, ports, airports and logistics hubs, and shorten travel time through faster road connectivity. Better road links from Punjab to Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh are also important for agriculture, industry, tourism and religious travel.

Timely Completion Now the Challenge...

A major portion of Bharatmala has already been completed, but the remaining project length in these four northern states is still significant. The government has adopted a policy of completing previously approved works rather than adding new projects. In this situation, resolving land, approval and contractor-related issues in time will be decisive. If work progresses according to the revised 2026 targets and the broader 2028-29 deadline, this network could bring a major transformation to road and economic connectivity across northern India.

2027 Poll Battle Begins at Baba Bakala

AAP, Congress, SAD, BJP and Waris Punjab De hold separate political conferences in historical Place



Samar News Baba Bakala :

Politics took centre stage alongside the religious observance of Rakhar Punia in Baba Bakala Sahib this year, with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), BJP and Akali Dal Waris Punjab De displaying their strength from separate political platforms. With the 2027 Assembly elections less than a year away, it

would be difficult to view this show of strength merely as part of the political tradition associated with the fair. The crowds gathered by different parties, the leaders present on the stages and the issues raised in their speeches offered indications of the possible contours of Punjab's next electoral battle. Baba Bakala's religious and Panthic significance makes it even

more important in terms of the political messages conveyed from here. The five distinct political pictures emerging from Baba Bakala reflect the complexity of the upcoming electoral contest in Punjab. The AAP government will seek to defend its record in office while highlighting the weaknesses of the opposition. The Congress will try to capitalise on the

anti-incumbency mood, but it will first have to demonstrate organisational unity. The SAD is attempting to regain its Panthic base, while Waris Punjab De is emerging as a challenge to it in the same space.

Challenge for AAP to Retain Power...

Led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, the Aam Aadmi Party held a state-level programme at the grain market in Rayya, using the event to showcase its political strength. For the AAP, the platform provided an opportunity to highlight the government's work while targeting its opponents. Mann attacked the Congress over its internal differences and criticised the reported possibility of closer ties between the SAD and BJP. He also raised issues related to sacrilege during the Akali government's tenure and the farmers'

movement. The AAP's core message was clear: the 2027 contest would be fought on the government's record and the alleged weaknesses of the opposition parties.

Congress Faces a Test of Strength...

The Congress platform became more a reflection of its internal differences than a display of achievements. A conference organised by former MLA Santokh Singh Bhalaipur was attended by former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, former Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and other senior leaders. However, Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring and several prominent leaders from his camp were absent. Randhawa described the leaders present on the stage as the "real Congress", while Channi's

active participation renewed discussion over his political influence and possible electoral role. For the Congress, the signals are mixed. The party has an opportunity to benefit from anti-incumbency, but internal differences over leadership could affect its preparations for the election.

SAD Faces Test of Panthic Base...

The Shiromani Akali Dal focused on strengthening its traditional Panthic base. SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal and other senior Akali leaders targeted their political opponents from the stage. For the SAD, the 2027 election is not merely a battle to return to power; it is also a test of whether the party can regain its traditional position in Panthic politics. The growing influence of Waris Punjab De has increased the SAD's concerns. The prominence

given to Panthic issues and drugs at the platforms of both groups in Baba Bakala underlined the possibility that a division of votes within the Panthic space could play an important role in the next election. Sukhbir Badal accused forces associated with Waris Punjab De of trying to weaken the SAD and targeted jailed MP Amritpal Singh and his supporters.

BJP Changes Strategy, Eyes Rural Punjab...

For the BJP, Baba Bakala was one of its most significant experiments this year. The party set up an independent political platform at Rakhar Punia for the first time. The presence of Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini was aimed at demonstrating the party's organisational strength and rural outreach in the Majha region.

A Solution Born Out of Shimla's Water Crisis Opens a New Path

Samar News

Shimla : Scientific thinking lies in looking for a possible solution within a crisis rather than viewing it merely as a problem. The severe water crisis that hit Shimla in 2018 drew the country's attention to the water security challenges faced by hill cities. That period also prompted young Shimla-based researcher Bhanu Krishan to explore new ways of reusing water at the household level. After years of study and experimentation, his efforts have now received formal recognition in the form of an Indian patent. Indian Patent No. 587962 has been granted for the 'Waste Water Filtering Device' developed by Bhanu Krishan, Shivani and Dr Anu Kumar. The application number is 202011009976. The patent records of Chandigarh University also mention

the invention and the three inventors. The 2018 Shimla water crisis was far more serious than a normal seasonal shortage. At the time, water supply was disrupted for several days in many parts of the city, while supplies fell sharply as natural water sources dried up. According to a scientific study, Shimla's daily water requirement was around 44 MLD, while supply fell to about 12.38 MLD during the crisis. People had to stand in long queues for water, and the administration had to rely on tankers. The experience raised a basic question: Is it necessary to use potable water for every household activity? The idea before Bhanu Krishan and his colleagues was that some types of wastewater generated in homes could be treated and reused for activities where drinking-water quality is not

required. The objective was to reduce the consumption of potable water and give used water an additional purpose before it was discharged directly into drains. The developed device uses materials such as polyurethane sheets and activated charcoal. According to the available patent-related details, the device includes a water-flow filtering structure and multiple layers of polyurethane that help absorb microscopic components associated with oil and soap. The water then passes through activated charcoal, where the process of adsorption is used to reduce certain other impurities. After treatment, the water can be collected in a storage tank. It is important to understand that the purpose of such technology is not to make treated water directly potable. Before using it for gar-

dening, plant irrigation, floor cleaning or other appropriate non-potable household activities, the water would need to be tested according to its quality and applicable standards. It should not be used for drinking or cooking without adequate scientific testing and additional treatment.

The invention has particular relevance in a hill city such as Shimla. The city's water supply has historically depended considerably on natural sources and mountain water systems. Studies on the 2018 crisis linked the situation to factors including low snowfall, reduced rainfall, increasing demand, environmental pressure and the weakening of water sources. In such circumstances, simply looking for new water sources will not be enough to ensure water security. Water conservation, reduc-



tion of leakage, rainwater harvesting and appropriate reuse of treated wastewater will also be important. The concept of decentralised water treatment at the household level presents an option in this direction. However, before any such technology is adopted on a large scale, detailed testing of its cost, capacity, maintenance requirements, filter life and effectiveness for different types of household wastewater would be necessary.

Bhanu Krishan is currently a PhD scholar in the Department of Biotechnology at Himachal Pradesh University. According to his available academic profile, he completed his undergraduate studies in biotechnology at Chandigarh University and pursued postgraduate studies in biotechnology at Panjab University. His research interests include environmental biotechnology, nanotechnology, bioremediation and wastewater-relat-

ed subjects. His research work is not limited to this device. Available research details also include studies related to the bioremediation of heavy metals in industrial wastewater and environmental sustainability. This indicates that his research has been focused on water- and environment-related problems for a considerable period. The significance of the invention lies in the idea that used water should not automatically be treated as waste, but its potential for reuse should be examined according to its quality and intended use. If treated water meets safe standards, using it for non-potable household requirements could reduce the demand for fresh water. This could help conserve water while also reducing the pressure on sewage systems.

Sale of 400 Acres of Panchayat Land in Ropar Stayed

Interim order by ADC on petition filed by Bara Phool Panchayat; alleged transfer of land to nearly 70 people

Sumemr News

Ropar : Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development) Chandra Jyoti Yadav has stayed the sale and purchase of around 400 acres of disputed shamlat land in Bara Phool village of Ropar district until the next hearing. The land is situated along the Ropar bypass and its estimated market value is around Rs 600 crore. The Bara Phool Gram Panchayat had approached the ADC's court challenging the alleged illegal transfer of the land into the names of private individuals. According to the Gram Panchayat, around 400 acres of shamlat land was originally meant for community use but was allegedly transferred over the past two decades into the names of nearly 70 private individuals.



als. The panchayat claims that some of the beneficiaries have no connection with Bara Phool village. It has demanded a detailed investigation by the Punjab Vigilance Bureau and sought restoration of the land in the name of the Gram Panchayat. Sources familiar with the matter said the initial transfer of the land was allegedly made in the names of around

40 influential people. The names of politically connected individuals are also claimed to have figured among them. Subsequently, different portions of the land were allegedly sold, taking the number of present titleholders to around 70. The allegations can be established only after completion of the investigation. Administrative sources said that if irregularities are

established, departmental as well as criminal action could be taken against officials who were involved or failed to prevent the alleged violations. The panchayat has alleged that officials of the Rural Development Department were involved in the alleged transfer of the land. It has sought scrutiny of the entire record to establish under what circumstances the ownership

was changed and which documents were used for the transfers. It has also demanded an examination of the present status of the land and transactions carried out in the past. Ropar Aam Aadmi Party MLA Dinesh Chadha alleged that the transfer of the land was carried out in violation of the provisions of the Punjab Village Common Lands (Regulation) Act. Referring to Section 11 of the Act, he said that under certain circumstances, rights could be granted to eligible cultivators who had been cultivating the land since before 1950. He alleged that in the present case, the transfers were made after 1997 and that the names of people who were not residents of the village were also included. Chadha has urged

Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann to order a thorough investigation and take strict action against those found responsible. He said accountability should be fixed under the government's policy of zero tolerance towards corruption. However, the level at which the rules were allegedly violated and those responsible will become clear only after the investigation is completed. The issue of Bara Phool's panchayat land has also been raised in the Punjab Assembly. During recent proceedings, MLA Dinesh Chadha questioned the alleged transfer of a large tract of panchayat land in the village. He alleged that influential persons had secured ownership of panchayat land with the alleged connivance of offi-

cials. The government had indicated that legal opinion would be sought in the matter. Earlier, the panchayat had also approached the Punjab Vigilance Bureau seeking an investigation. The complaint alleged that shamlat land had been systematically transferred into the names of private individuals. The panchayat sought restoration of the land and action against those responsible for the alleged irregularities. Recent Assembly-related reports have also carried allegations concerning a substantially larger tract of panchayat land in Bara Phool. the present ADC proceedings concern around 400 acres. The latest interim order of the ADC (Development) prevents sale and purchase of the disputed land for the time being.

Special Parcel Services Raise Questions at Ludhiana Station

Sunil, Ludhiana

Although the parcel department at Ludhiana railway station closes for the general public at 5 pm, the service reportedly remains available 24 hours a day for one or two favoured agents. Sources allege that station officials approach senior divisional authorities seeking permission on the grounds that such arrangements are increasing revenue. Divisional officials, apparently convinced by the revenue argument, approve the request, following which the station authorities grant the permission. However, sources claim that the permission is not available to all private agents but is allegedly being given only to one or two favoured agents. Private agents working at the station say they are sometimes not allowed to book their consignments even if they arrive just five minutes late during

the day. Against this backdrop, the alleged provision of special services to a favoured agent late at night raises questions about whether rules are being applied equally. According to sources, the practice of booking parcels for favoured agents late at night after obtaining special permission has reportedly been continuing for a long time without coming to wider notice. In one or two recent instances, parcels containing auto parts were booked from Ludhiana station late at night on the 5th of the month. The consignments were reportedly loaded onto a train immediately and dispatched to other states. The matter came to light within a few hours. Sources claim that station officials, apparently concerned that the issue could create complications for them, subsequently sought an-

other arrangement. They reportedly approached divisional authorities and put forward the proposal to keep the Ludhiana station parcel department open for 24 hours. When the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (Freight) of the Firozpur Division was contacted for his response, he did not answer the phone. However, a parcel department agent, speaking on condition of anonymity, described what was allegedly happening at the station. The relevant records have also reportedly been preserved. **Parcel Scanner Also Being Operated by Agent...** The same favoured agent who is allegedly receiving special treatment from the parcel officials at Ludhiana station is also operating the scanner installed in the parcel department, according to the report. Goods are scanned through the

machine before it is finally determined whether they can be sent to another state through the station's parcel department. Although the scanner contract is reportedly held by another company, the favoured agent allegedly presents himself as the contractor, while private individuals engaged by him are reportedly handling the scanner operations. This raises questions about the alleged coordination between the officials and the agent. Another concern is that such an important responsibility is reportedly being handled by a private agent who also has a financial interest in parcel bookings. In theory, this could create a conflict of interest because an agent could potentially have his own consignments scanned and influence the resulting report. There is no claim here that the agent has actually



done so. However, the possibility of such a conflict of interest remains and, if such a practice were to occur, it could potentially go undetected. **-Agent Also Has VP...** The favoured agent is allegedly not only operating the scanner but has also obtained a VP (a wagon parcel or goods-carrying coach) for the parcel department. Sources claim that whenever the train carrying the VP is scheduled to arrive in Ludhiana, the private agent seeks special permission from officials in advance

to send consignments. The exact nature of any alleged understanding between the agent and station officials is not clear. However, sources claim that the arrangement raises questions about compliance with established rules and procedures. **Special Permission for Food Items, Medicines and Animals...** According to officials in the department, special permission for booking parcels late at night and dispatching them immediately to another state

is generally granted for food items, medicines and animals. Such permission may also be given in emergency situations or during VVIP movements, when senior authorities are directly involved. However, sources claim that the consignments being handled by the private agent do not appear to fall within these categories. According to the information available, bicycles and auto parts are among the items allegedly being sent to other states late at night under special permission. The allegations raise questions about whether the same rules are being applied uniformly to all parcel agents and whether special permissions are being granted strictly according to prescribed norms. A clear response from the railway authorities would be necessary to establish the facts and determine whether any rules or procedures have been violated.

Pollution board inspection finds signs of industrial, pharmaceutical and solid-waste dumping at river system

Toxic Waste Pollutes Sirsa River, Punjab Seeks Action from Himachal and Haryana

Summer News,

Ropar : The issue of industrial, chemical, pharmaceutical and solid-waste dumping into the Sirsa River and its tributaries is becoming increasingly serious. The investigation, which began after large quantities of waste accumulated at the Ropar Headworks, has now extended to areas along the Himachal Pradesh and Haryana borders. The Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) has written to the pollution control boards and concerned district administrations of both states, seeking immediate action against alleged illegal dumping and steps to assess and recover

environmental damage. The board's inspection has found indications that waste is entering the river system at several locations. The issue came to light on August 23, when Ropar MLA Dinesh Chadha visited the Ropar Headworks. Large quantities of plastic, thermocol, industrial waste and other suspected material were found accumulated there. The pollution control board collected samples, following which an FIR was registered at Ropar City police station against unidentified industrial units. The case includes provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution)



Act and the Environment (Protection) Act. No specific industrial unit has been held responsible so far. On August 25, a joint team comprising the MLA, police and pollution control board officials inspected areas adjoining Himachal Pradesh and Haryana. According to the board, solid waste was found accumulated near a municipal solid-waste

facility at Kenduwal in Baddi, with concerns that leachate from the site could be entering the Sirsa River. The inspection also looked into complaints alleging that some industrial units in the Baddi-Barotiwal-Nalagarh industrial belt were dumping waste into the river. Near the Haryana border, waste including industrial

material, multilayered plastic, discarded medicines and pharmaceutical packaging was reportedly found along the Balad Nadi and Marranwali Khad. According to the inspection findings, water from streams such as Balad and Salad eventually connects with the Sirsa river system and flows into the Sutlej. This means waste dumped

at different locations can be carried downstream during heavy rain or strong flows. Another serious aspect has emerged in the case. Ropar police have issued notices to scrap dealers operating from the riverbed of the Bhud rivulet in Nawanagar and Maddali villages near the Himachal-Haryana border. Police have asked those operating businesses on the riverbed to join the investigation. The inquiry is also examining how industrial or hazardous waste reached these locations and why it was dumped around the water channels.

Biomedical Waste Raises Concern...

The reported discovery of used syringes, discarded medicines and material linked to the pharmaceutical industry during the inspection has added to concerns. Biomedical waste left in the open can create risks of infection and pose a public-health hazard. Industrial chemicals entering water bodies can also affect aquatic life and the river ecosystem. Environmental experts have called for real-time water-quality monitoring sensors at key points where water enters the Sutlej. Such monitoring could help identify pollution sources more quickly and enable authorities to take immediate action.

Yoga Is Not Just Physical Exercise: Sanjeev Tyagi

Indian Yoga Association Punjab chairman explains how yoga can help bring balance to modern lifestyles

Payal Mohindra, Ludhiana

Samar News : In an exclusive interaction with The Samar News, Yogacharya Sanjeev Tyagi spoke at length on several important subjects, including the role of yoga among children, its usefulness in sports, pranayama, Shatkarma, yoga for women, the gap between food and yoga practice, and the relationship between yoga and modern fitness methods. Sanjeev Tyagi stressed the importance of making yoga a regular part of daily life. Here are the major excerpts from the conversation:

Question: First of all, what is the difference between 'yoga' and 'yoga'?

Answer: This is a major misconception. Yoga has been a part of our Indian tradition. In my view, as yoga spread

from India to other parts of the world over time, it was adopted in different forms and under different names in different countries. Today, the word 'yoga' is commonly used in everyday conversation, but at its core lies the Indian tradition of yoga. It would not be correct to regard yoga merely as a physical activity. It should be viewed as a way of life and a discipline that works towards overall well-being.

Question: Then why do you say, 'Yoga Se Hi Hoga'?

Answer: Today, people take part in gyms, different forms of fitness training and sports activities. These focus considerably on physical fitness, but the scope of yoga is not limited to the body. Yoga also addresses mental and spiritual well-being along with physical health. That is why I consider it important for achieving overall

well-being.

Question: How long have you yourself been associated with yoga?

Answer: I have been associated with the field of yoga for around 30 years and have been working professionally for 26 years. I completed my Master's in Yogic Sciences from Gurukula Kangri University. I have also been a national-level sportsperson and athlete and was involved in sports at the university level.

Question: What does the title 'Yogacharya' mean?

Answer: In the traditional education system, it can be understood in a simple way. Undergraduate-level education in a subject is associated with the title 'Shastri', while master's-level education is associated with 'Acharya'. In the Gurukul tradition, discipline was given great importance along with education. I studied at



a Gurukul myself and also taught there, so I understand the role of discipline very well.

Question: What is the biggest mistake people make while performing yoga asanas?

Answer: There are different methods of practising yoga, and even the same asana may be performed differently. For example, Paschimotanasana is performed differently in Hatha Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga. Therefore, it is not appropriate to label every different method as wrong. The most important thing is to understand the correct movement and the body's capacity.

Question: While teaching yoga to children, is correction more important or encouragement?

Answer: At the initial stage, I believe the child should first be motivated. If we start pointing out shortcomings from the very first day, the child's enthusiasm may decline. A child needs both challenge and encour-

agement to move forward. Technique and correction can be worked on later.

Question: How do you view the possibility of yoga being included in sporting events such as the Olympics?

Answer: Traditionally, yoga was not intended as a competitive activity. The basic philosophy of yoga is different from comparison, and Ahimsa, or non-violence, has an important place in the Yamas and Niyamas. However, yoga-asana competitions have their own importance in connecting children with yoga and encouraging them. If they help develop discipline, interest and a habit of practice among children, they can be considered a positive step.

Question: Does promoting yoga as a sport take it away from its original form?

Answer: Not necessarily. The basic purpose of yoga is not competition, but competitions can be useful for challenging children and developing their skills. Yoga-asana championships are now organised at various levels. I believe that instead of getting caught up in controversies, we should focus on outcomes and the development of children.

Question: Mental pressure is increasing among children today. What role can yoga play in this?

Answer: Children today face pressure related to studies, competition and various expectations. I believe yoga, particularly pranayama, can help them work on their emotions and mind. That is why I suggest that schools should consider making yoga a part of regular life rather than treating it merely as an extra-curricular activity.

Gangsters Being Used for Terror Plots in Punjab

Role of alleged ISI handlers under investigation



Summer News , Chandigarh :

Security agencies have found important clues in the investigation into the nexus between organised crime and terrorism in Punjab. Following the interrogation of three alleged Bambiha gang members deported from Malaysia, agencies are probing links between gangsters operating from abroad, local criminals and alleged Pakistan-based handlers. According to the Punjab Police, cases related to murder, extortion, explosives and the conspiracy to carry out a grenade attack in Ludhiana have been registered against the three. The police have also alleged links with Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The accused brought back from Malaysia have been identified as Jaspreet Singh alias Jas Behbal of Faridkot and Ajay Singh and Pavnideep Singh of Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan. After being deported from Malaysia, all three were arrested by the Punjab Police at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi. They were subsequently brought to Punjab and questioned in connection with separate cases. According to the police, the action was carried out by the Foreign Fugitive Search and Extradition Cell of the Punjab Police's Counter Intelligence Wing with

the assistance of central agencies. An important link in the entire network came to light in Ludhiana in October 2025. The police began investigating the case after recovering a Chinese-made P-86 hand grenade. The investigation reportedly revealed the role of alleged operatives based abroad along with local youths. According to the police, Ajay alias Ajay Malaysia, Jas Behbal and Pavnideep, who were allegedly living in Malaysia, were operating through local contacts. A total of 10 people were arrested in the case. According to the police investigation, contact with alleged Pakistan-based handlers was being maintained through these individuals based in Malaysia. The local network was allegedly assigned responsibilities related to delivering the grenade and preparing for the attack. The alleged objective was to create fear and unrest in Punjab by carrying out an attack in a crowded area. The investigation also reportedly found that some people previously involved in drug trafficking were allegedly being used as couriers and facilitators by the network.

-Nexus Between Gangsters and Terror Networks...
The most serious aspect of the case for security agencies is the alleged use of organised crime

networks operating abroad for terrorist activities. Gangsters already have local contacts, established routes for trafficking weapons and narcotics, and access to young people. Terrorist organisations can potentially use such networks to create low-risk local modules for carrying out their activities. However, the police investigation is still under way and the allegations against the accused are yet to be established in court. Officials said the interrogation of the three accused is aimed at determining which people operating from abroad were in contact with them, what kind of instructions they allegedly received and who their local associates in Punjab were. Ludhiana police officials said the questioning could provide important information about the alleged network linked to the ISI and its contacts operating in Punjab.

-Interrogation May Provide New Leads
The Jas Behbal is also reportedly wanted in connection with a murder case in Faridkot in 2025. Ajay Singh and Pavnideep Singh, meanwhile, have been accused of allegedly playing a role in the explosives-related case in Ludhiana. The police have taken all three into custody in separate cases and begun questioning them. According to reports, two of the accused

have been taken into the custody of the Ludhiana Police, while Jas Behbal has been taken into custody by the Faridkot Police in connection with the murder case.

Crackdown on Criminals Hiding Abroad...
In recent months, the Punjab Police has placed particular emphasis on bringing back gangsters and accused persons linked to terror networks who are hiding abroad. The return of three alleged Bambiha gang members from Malaysia is part of this effort. The operation, carried out in coordination with central agencies, is being viewed as an important step against organised crime allegedly being operated across international borders. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had also publicly shared information about the return of the three accused from Malaysia and their arrest by the Punjab Police. The police are now investigating whether the Ludhiana conspiracy was an isolated incident or part of a broader strategy to use gangster networks for terrorist activities in Punjab. Following the interrogation of the three accused, investigators are expected to gain a clearer picture of the alleged links between foreign-based operatives, local facilitators and networks involved in drug and arms trafficking.

10 CLU Approvals Granted Come Under ED Probe

Summer News , Chandigarh :

The investigation into the alleged use of forged consent letters to obtain Change of Land Use (CLU) approval for the Suntek City project in Mohali is now expanding. Apart from Suntek City, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has also brought under its scanner 10 such CLU approvals granted to private real estate companies after 2021. The investigating agency is trying to determine whether similar cases also involved relaxation of rules, forged documents or irregularities related to the consent of landowners. Senior administrative officials of Punjab are also being questioned in the case. Former Chief Secretary and current Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) Anurag Verma has been summoned to appear before the ED at its Jalandhar office on August 31. Meanwhile, IAS officer Kanwal Preet Brar, who served as Director of the Town and Country Planning Department in 2024, has been summoned again on August 27 along with additional documents. Brar had earlier appeared before the ED on August 18.

-Probe Expands Beyond Suntek City...
The ED investigation is primarily based on a case registered by the Punjab Police, in which farmers had alleged that their signatures and thumb impressions on consent letters relating to their land were allegedly forged. According to the investigation, forged documents were allegedly used to obtain CLU approval for the development of around 108.58 acres of agricultural land for Suntek City. The ED had also arrested Ajay Sehgal, secretary of the Indian Cooperative



House Building Society, in connection with the case. In July, the agency filed a prosecution complaint before the Special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Mohali relating to alleged proceeds of crime worth around Rs 348 crore. The agency has alleged that attempts were made to conceal and use money allegedly generated through irregularities in the Suntek City project. However, the allegations made in the case are yet to be finally determined by the court.

-Questions Over 25% Land Ownership Rule...
Punjab's 2014 policy has also become significant in the investigation. Under the policy, a developer was considered eligible for a real estate project if it owned at least 25 per cent of the project area. For the remaining land, the arrangement required submission of consent or a no-objection certificate from the respective landowners. The investigating agency suspects that this provision may have been allegedly misused in some cases to prepare forged consent letters and obtain CLU or layout approvals. The provision is under scrutiny also because ownership of only 25 per cent of the land could provide a developer a route to develop a project over a much larger parcel. If the consent of owners of the remaining land was not genuine, questions could also arise over subsequent land transactions carried out on the basis of such approvals and the

rights of buyers.

-Partial Cancellation in Seven Cases...
The investigation has also brought to light the process followed by the Town and Country Planning Department for cancelling CLUs. According to available records, partial cancellation of CLUs under Section 85 was carried out in seven cases after 2024 involving alleged fraud, forged bank NOCs or other disputes. Between 2021 and 2025, the names of Bajwa Developers, Innovative Housing and Infrastructure, Altus Space Builders, Sukhman Infrastructure and Sunny Lovely Developers have emerged in such cases. At the departmental level, it has been stated that cases involving forged consent were dealt with under Section 90 until 2022. Subsequently, following legal advice obtained from the office of the Advocate General of Punjab in 2024, action under Section 85 was initiated in some cases. Under this approach, partial cancellation of CLUs was undertaken pending the receipt of forensic reports from the police.

-Licence Also Cancelled in Suntek Case...
In the Suntek City case, along with partial cancellation of the CLU for the concerned plots, the project's licence under the Punjab Apartment and Property Regulation Act was also cancelled. Following this action, the promoter was prevented from proceeding with the sale of additional plots.

BJP's Booth-Level Micro-Management

New strategy for the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections covering all 117 seats

Summer News, CHANDIGARH :

For the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has prepared a detailed strategy to strengthen its organisation down to levels below the booth. According to the roadmap that emerged during party National General Secretary B.L. Santosh's visit to Punjab, a new election-management structure will be developed with all 117 Assembly constituencies in the state in mind. The objective is to enable the organisation to conduct continuous political activities in every area instead of becoming active only during elections. The BJP's existing organisational structure includes around 25,332 booths. The party now plans to create 6,425 sub-circles and 622 circles above these booths.

Separate Team at Every Booth, Digital Outreach

The new arrangement also places emphasis on activating around 25,000 booth committees. The party has proposed representation for women, youth and various disadvantaged sections of society in these committees. In addition, there are plans to create WhatsApp groups of around 250 members at the booth level. Through these groups, the party wants to manage local issues, workers' activities and voter outreach in a more organised manner. The strategy is also significant because the BJP had contested elections in Punjab for a long time in alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). The party is now focusing on strength-



ening its independent political identity and organisational base in the state. At meetings of the central leadership in June, the party had also directed its leaders and workers to prepare for all 117 Assembly seats. BJP national president Nitin Nabin had likewise asked workers to stay away from discussions on alliances and concentrate on strengthening the organisation.

-Akali Alliance Picture Still Not Completely Clear...

Publicly, the BJP is conveying a message that it is preparing to contest all 117 seats on its own. Santosh also asked party workers during his Punjab visit to prepare along these lines. State president Kewal Singh Dhillon has already spoken about contesting all seats independently. Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu and

working president Ashwani Sharma have also reiterated the same position. Despite this, political discussions regarding a possible alliance with the SAD have not completely disappeared. BJP national president Nitin Nabin had said in June that the party was currently neither in favour of nor opposed to an alliance and that the situation would be assessed closer to the elections before

taking a decision. Recently, SAD leaders have also indicated the possibility of reviving the former alliance. This has led to some uncertainty among BJP workers in Punjab as well.

-Balancing Old and New Leaders

Along with organisational expansion, the BJP leadership also faces the challenge of maintaining a balance between its old workers and leaders who have joined the party recently. Following recent organisational changes, reports of resentment among some senior leaders and their supporters had emerged. During his visit, Santosh sought to address this discontent. Describing old workers as the founda-

tion of the organisation, he stressed the need to develop a family-like coordination between new leaders and veteran workers.

The BJP's possible election strategy is likely to focus on issues such as the drug problem, law and order, the migration of young people abroad, employment, the state's financial condition and industries shifting to other states. Party meetings have reportedly held detailed discussions on the easy availability of drugs and Punjab's economic challenges. Efforts to expand the party's outreach among the Ravidassia community have also been described as part of the organisational strategy.

NRI Meet Flags Police Inaction, Fraud

Summer News, CHANDIGARH :

At an 'NRI Milni' programme organised in Bathinda, Punjab, Punjabis settled abroad prominently raised complaints of alleged police inaction, immigration fraud and land-related disputes. A large number of NRI families brought their grievances before officials and said that their complaints often do not receive timely action because they live abroad. The NRI community also expressed concern over the rapidly increasing addiction to mobile phones among children in Punjab and Haryana and announced an initiative to launch a social campaign to address the issue. Officials from the revenue, police, immigration,

panchayat and other departments were present at the programme organised by the district administration. According to officials, the interaction programme was organised to resolve NRI citizens' complaints on the spot and review pending cases. The district administration said all complaints received during the NRI Milni had been forwarded to the concerned departments and their disposal would be reviewed regularly. Officials said coordination among departments would be strengthened to resolve complaints related to land disputes, police cases and immigration fraud.

During the meeting, several NRI families alleged that despite their complaints being



registered, there were unnecessary delays in police action. Some people said attempts had been made to take possession of their properties by taking advantage of their absence abroad, while in several cases, investigations had not progressed even after complaints were registered.

Police officials present at the programme assured the complainants that all pending cases would be

reviewed separately and cases where investigations were pending would be taken forward on priority. Officials also said complaints would be regularly monitored under the special arrangements made for NRI-related matters.

A large number of complaints related to fraud by immigration agencies also came up during the NRI Milni. Complainants alleged that

several agents took lakhs of rupees on the promise of sending people abroad but made false assurances regarding visas, jobs or admissions.

In some cases, complaints were also made about preparation of forged documents and agents cutting off contact after receiving money. The administration has directed the concerned departments to expedite investigations into

such cases. Officials said complaints already registered in connection with immigration fraud were also being reviewed and legal action would be taken against the concerned agencies wherever necessary. Land and property-related disputes accounted for the largest number of complaints at the programme. Several Punjabis living abroad alleged that relatives or other people had taken advantage of their absence to attempt to on their land, alter documents or carry out illegal sales. Some complaints also raised issues of irregularities in revenue records and pending mutations. The district administration assured the complainants that revenue officials

would conduct time-bound investigations in such cases and provide them with regular progress updates.

Plan to Connect Schools and Families

NRI representatives suggested that special programmes on digital balance should be organised in schools in villages and cities. Plans were also proposed for workshops for parents, sports competitions and promotion of creative activities for children at community centres. Social organisations said several such models have been successful abroad, where families and schools work together to reduce children's screen time. Preparations are now under way to launch a similar initiative in Punjab and Haryana.

Women Officers Handling Key Responsibilities in Mansa

Summer News, Mansa :

The growing participation of women in administration and public life in Mansa district presents a positive picture.

However, the decline in the number of girls born in the district has emerged as a cause for concern. According to Health Department data, Mansa's sex ratio at birth declined from 921 in 2024 to 906 girls per 1,000 boys in 2025. In contrast, Punjab's average improved from 922 to 923 during the same period. Mansa's situation is significant because several key responsibilities related to administration, education, law and order and social welfare are currently being handled by women officers. Deputy Commissioner Navjot Kaur is leading the district administration. Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Poonam Singh and Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development) Kritika Goyal are also handling important responsibilities. District Development and Panchayat Officer Kavita Garg, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Baljit Kaur and District Programme Officer Khushpreet Kaur are among the other women holding key positions. In the Education Department, District Education Officer Neelam Rani and District Education Officer Manu Bala, along with District Legal Services Authority Secretary Rajwinder Kaur and Inspector Bient Kaur, Station House Officer of Mansa City-2 police station, are also handling important responsibilities. Thus, the presence of women in the district's administrative structure is not limited to numbers; they are also occupying positions involving decision-making and implementation of government programmes.

The political representation of women in the Mansa region is also noteworthy. Former Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal is serving as the Member of Parliament from the Bathinda Lok Sabha constituency for the fourth consecutive term. This presents another dimension of women's participation in both administration and politics.

Decline in Sex Ratio Raises Concern



Alongside this strong picture of women's leadership, the declining sex ratio at birth has emerged as a matter of social concern. Mansa recorded a ratio of 906 in 2025. Several districts of Punjab performed better. The ratio was 964 in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, 962 in Hoshiarpur, 952 in Malerkotla and 939 in Barnala.

Health Department-related data released in May had also indicated that the Malwa region was among the areas most affected by the decline in the sex ratio. However, Mansa Civil Surgeon Dr Ranjit Rai pointed to an important administrative factor behind the lower figure. According to him, many families from the district travel to neighbouring Haryana for childbirth. Details of some of these deliveries do not reach the Mansa Health Department in time. He said that if the complete data on such births were included in the district's records, the situation could appear better. He also said there was no confirmation of reports that people from Mansa travel to Haryana for sex determination tests followed by abortions of female fetuses.

Strong Administrative Performance

Under the leadership of women officers, Mansa has achieved several administrative milestones in recent months. During the Special Intensive Revision, the district ranked first in Punjab in the digitisation of enumeration forms related to the electoral rolls. In the digital crop survey for the 2025-26 Rabi season, Mansa secured third position in the state. The

district also ranked among the top performers in the time-bound disposal of complaints through the public grievance redressal system. Mansa secured the first position in Punjab in 2025-26 for declaring 15 villages as Open Defecation Free (ODF) Model Plus villages. The district also remained among the top three in the availability of citizen services through e-Sewa and in screening for non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. These achievements are being viewed in the context of administrative coordination and effective implementation of government programmes under the leadership of women officers.

-Social Change Needed Beyond the Numbers...

The issue of the sex ratio at birth is not new to Punjab. In 2025, a decline was recorded in 14 of the state's 23 districts, with a large number of them belonging to the Malwa region. At the same time, the Health Department has been focusing on awareness programmes as well as monitoring pregnancy registrations, abortion cases and related health services. Mansa's present situation highlights a contradiction: while women are advancing into leadership roles in administration, education, policing and public institutions, the data related to the birth of girls continues to pose a challenge. In this context, the success of women's leadership needs to be linked with efforts to change social attitudes towards the birth of daughters, strengthen health monitoring and ensure more accurate recording of birth data.

Batala's Industrial Identity on the Decline, Revival Still Elusive

Summer News, Batala :

Once counted among Punjab's major industrial cities, Batala is today struggling to regain its old industrial prominence. According to data from the Industries Department, nearly 60% of the city's industrial units have shut down over the past three decades. Once known for foundries, machine tools, agricultural equipment and iron products, several of the city's old industrial areas now have only limited production. Industry representatives say the problem is not limited to closed units; even those that continue to operate are struggling amid rising costs and competition from cheaper products.

Batala's industrial story developed rapidly both before and after Independence. The city built a strong tradition of foundry and machine manufacturing that also contributed to the growth of Punjab's agricultural sector. Agricultural equipment, lathes, cast-iron products and other engineering goods were supplied to different parts of the country. After Partition, the loss of links with old commercial markets such as Lahore, Sialkot and Faisalabad had an impact, while industrial policies and growing competition in subsequent decades added to the difficulties. The decline of Batala's industrial sector can be gauged from the foundry industry. According to industry-related figures, there were around 2,000 foundries in the city around 1980. Their number has now fallen to about 400, of which only around 100 are reportedly operating regularly and successfully. Against more than 450 agricultural equipment manufacturing units in the past, only around 120 are now active in the sector. The machine-tool industry is said to be in an even worse position.

According to entrepreneurs associated with the Batala Industrial Estate Factories Association, the crisis is no longer confined to foundries or machine tools. Businesses manufacturing galvanised and conduit pipes, brass products, aluminium doors and windows, as well as wooden and steel furniture, are



also under pressure. Rising raw-material costs, electricity and other operating expenses, coupled with price competition in the market, have made it increasingly difficult for local manufacturers to remain viable. Industrialists say the abolition of the Freight Equalisation Policy in 1992 had a serious impact on Batala. Under the policy, freight costs for major raw materials such as coal, iron and steel were equalised across the country. After the policy was discontinued, industrial centres such as Batala, located far from mineral-producing regions, began facing higher raw-material costs. Local industries also lacked sufficient capital to shift production closer to sources of raw materials. In addition, the period of militancy in Punjab during the 1980s dealt another major blow to industrial activity. Subsequently, tax incentives, electricity-related concessions and better business facilities available in other states encouraged several entrepreneurs to relocate their units. Batala's business community has for years been demanding a special package similar to the industrial incentives offered in states such as Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

Cheap Used Machinery Adds to the Challenge

In recent years, cheap used industrial machinery imported from abroad has created another challenge for local machine manufacturers and engineering units. Business owners say machines that have already been used overseas are entering the Indian market at relatively low prices. Local manufacturers of

new machinery find it difficult to compete with them on price.

As a result, several small industries are facing the dual challenge of modernising their operations while also remaining competitive in the market.

-How Much Hope from the New Industrial Policy?

The Punjab government approved the Industrial and Business Development Policy-2026 in March. The policy includes provisions to encourage not only new industrial units but also the modernisation and expansion of existing industries. It provides additional incentives for nine priority sectors, along with additional benefits for industries located in the state's border districts. The government has set a target of attracting investment worth Rs 75,000 crore during 2026-27. Batala industrialists want the Central Government to declare the city a "Priority Industrial Cluster". They have also demanded that the coverage of financial concessions available to border areas be extended from 30 km to 50 km from the international border.

Need for a 20-Year Plan

Industry representatives believe Batala cannot be revived merely through announcements about setting up new industrial units. A long-term plan is required to modernise the existing industrial infrastructure, promote research and development, create technical employment opportunities for young people and protect local manufacturing from competition posed by cheaper imported machinery.

SAD's New Social Engineering Strategy Gains Minority Space



Summer News, Chandigarh :

Ahead of the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has adopted a new social strategy at the organisational level. Party president Sukhbir Singh Badal has appointed leaders from the Christian and Muslim communities as halqa in-charges in various Assembly constituencies across the state. So far, the party has given this responsibility to 15 Christian and 19 Muslim leaders. The SAD says both minority communities have made significant contributions to the social development of Punjab and that giving them representation in the organisation is part of the party's inclusive approach. More such appointments are likely to be made in the coming days. The move comes at a time when the SAD is facing the challenge of strengthening its traditional political base while also dealing with the challenge posed by factions that have moved away from the party. The SAD (Reorganised), led by Giani Harpreet Singh, and the Akali Dal-linked political efforts associated with Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh are attempting to establish their space among Sikh voters. Against this backdrop, the SAD's effort is being seen not merely as an expansion of its organisation but also as an attempt to increase its political outreach among different social groups. The SAD has long been a party with a strong base in Sikh politics and among rural Sikh voters in Punjab. However, the party has faced several political and organisational setbacks over the past few years. Its performance

in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections was weak, and it also failed to achieve the expected success in the 2025 Assembly bypolls. At the same time, different factions have become active within Akali politics. The party leadership now appears to be attempting to give its organisation a broader social base. The decision to give Christian and Muslim leaders responsibility at the halqa level is part of this strategy. The populations of the two communities are not evenly distributed across Punjab, but their electoral influence is significant in several Assembly constituencies. In particular, minority voters can influence electoral equations in border districts and parts of the Doaba and Majha regions.

Not Just Appointments, But Organisational Expansion...

SAD general secretary Daljit Singh Cheema has said that separate organisational committees will also be formed for the Christian and Muslim communities. This indicates that the party wants to build a permanent organisational presence among these communities rather than reaching out to them only during elections. The role of a halqa in-charge is important in running party activities in an Assembly constituency, bringing workers together, conveying local issues to the leadership and accelerating election preparations. Giving this responsibility to leaders from minority communities therefore signals their growing role within the party's organisational structure. The strategy comes at a time when all major political parties in Punjab are working to strengthen their support among

different social groups. The Aam Aadmi Party government is focusing on programmes aimed at expanding its religious and cultural outreach, while the Bharatiya Janata Party is also attempting to reach different social groups through organisational appointments. In such an environment, the SAD's focus on minority communities could make the electoral competition more interesting.

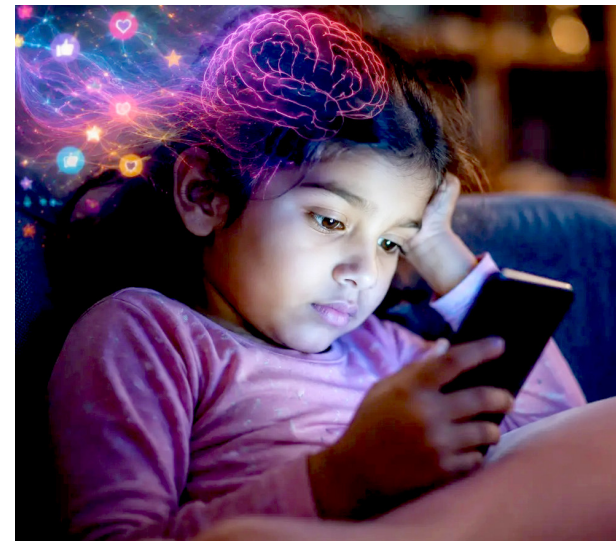
Factionalism Remains a Major Challenge...

For the SAD, the need for social engineering is not limited to electoral expansion. With different centres of Akali politics emerging within and outside the party, the leadership also faces the challenge of keeping its traditional organisation united. Some former Akali leaders and influential figures associated with the religious sphere have created separate platforms. The activities of the SAD (Reorganised) and political efforts associated with Amritpal Singh are considered particular challenges for the party. During the death anniversary programme of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal in August, the SAD and its breakaway faction held separate events. This once again highlighted the continuing divisions within Akali politics. The SAD leadership therefore faces a two-pronged challenge. First, it has to retain its traditional Sikh voters, and second, it has to expand its hold among social groups where its organisation has remained relatively weak. The appointment of Christian and Muslim halqa in-charges is being viewed as part of this dual strategy.

'Reels' Addiction May Affect Children's Language Ability

Summer News, Mohali :

Constantly showing young children videos, 'Reels' and 'Shorts' on mobile phones can be harmful to their language development. Experts say the concern is not only the amount of time spent looking at a screen, but also the reduction in parent-child conversations, storytelling, reading books, play and face-to-face interaction caused by excessive screen use. In such an environment, some children may develop speaking and language comprehension skills relatively slowly. According to paediatricians, over the past few years, more parents have been taking young children to doctors with complaints of delayed speech. In some such cases, although the child's hearing ability, nervous system and other developmental aspects are found to be normal, excessive screen use in daily life and limited family interaction may emerge as contributing factors. However, experts also make it clear that screen exposure alone is not the cause of delayed speech. Hearing problems, developmental conditions, sleep, the family environment and the amount of interaction a child receives also play important roles. Experts say videos such as 'Reels' and 'Shorts' present rapidly changing visuals and sounds within a very short period. This means the child is continuously exposed to one stimulating piece of content after another. In contrast, listening to a book, playing with toys, having a conversation or completing an activity is a relatively slower process. Therefore, if a child becomes accustomed to constantly watching fast-paced videos, other activities may appear less attractive to them. However, it would not be appropriate to blame short videos alone for a child's lack of attention. Experts say adequate sleep, sufficient physical activity, the family environment, parental involvement and the nature of the content shown on the screen are also important. Therefore, the solution is not simply to take away the mobile phone, but to create a balance in the child's overall daily routine.



Research Also Raises Concerns

Recent research on the relationship between mobile-screen exposure and language development in children has also raised concerns. A large study published in 2024 involving 31,125 children aged two and three found that children who used mobile devices for one hour or more per day were more likely to have weaker language development and language-related difficulties. The association was found to be stronger among children who spent two hours or more on screens. The study also indicated that regularly reading aloud to a child may help reduce the negative impact of some difficulties related to language comprehension. Another study analysed interactions between children aged 12 to 36 months and their parents. It examined how screen use could affect the time available for interaction between parents and children. During the early years, hearing words, producing sounds and taking turns in conversations are extremely important for language learning. Another study published in 2026 also examined screen use, the nature of screen content and factors such as co-viewing with parents in the context of children's language and executive-skill development. Researchers noted that understanding the relationship between screens and development requires consideration not only of the total amount of screen time, but also of factors such as content and adult involvement with the child.

World Health Organization's Advice

According to World Health Organization guidelines, recreational screen time is not recommended for one-year-old children. At the age of two, sedentary screen-based activities should not exceed one hour, and less is considered better. For children aged three to four, screen time is also recommended to be limited to one hour. The organisation emphasises active play and activities such as reading, storytelling and talking with parents instead of screen-based activities. According to the WHO, early childhood is a period of rapid physical and cognitive development. It is also the stage when family routines and a child's habits begin to take shape. Therefore, active play, adequate sleep and interaction with parents should be prioritised over prolonged sedentary screen viewing. **Keep Screens Away During Meals and in the Bedroom** Experts advise parents to avoid giving children mobile phones or tablets during meals. If a child becomes accustomed to watching videos continuously while eating, a strong association can develop between food and screen use. As a result, the child may resist eating without a video. Similarly, keeping the bedroom screen-free can be useful. Reducing screen use before bedtime may help maintain a healthier sleep routine. Parents should also ensure that mobile-phone use does not reduce the child's outdoor play, physical activity, reading time or time spent with family members.