

HARYANA RAJYA SABHA POLLS

Bhatia, Boudh win; 5 Congress MLAs cross-vote

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

BJP's Sanjay Bhatia and Karamvir Singh Boudh of the Congress were elected to the Rajya Sabha from Haryana after the counting for the keenly-watched twin seats went past midnight following allegations of violation of vote secrecy by both sides, officials said on Tuesday.

Five votes were declared invalid, four of the Congress and one of the BJP, they said. While BJP's Bhatia (58)

is a former Lok Sabha MP from Karnal, Boudh (61) is a retired Haryana government employee and a prominent Dalit activist, currently serving as the coordinator of the National Scheduled Castes Department of the Congress. The two legislators of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) abstained from voting, reducing the number of valid votes to 88 in the 90-member Haryana Assembly.

INLD leaders Abhay Singh Chautala and Aditya Devi

Congress to issue show-cause notices to MLAs ; Bhatia is a former Lok Sabha MP from Karnal, Boudh is a retired Haryana government employee and a prominent Dalit activist

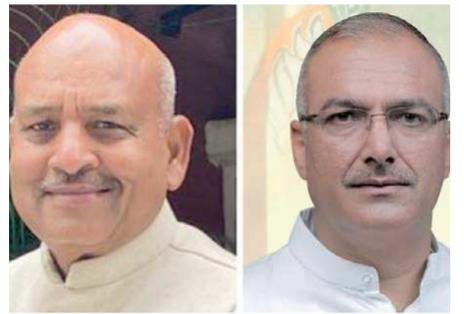
Lal said the party decided to abstain from keeping people's sentiments in view. After both the Congress and the BJP approached the Election Commission alleging violation of vote secrecy, the poll panel declared Congress MLA Paramvir Singh's vote

as invalid. Bhatia won the first seat comfortably, polling 39 first-preference votes.

In the fight for the second seat, Boudh polled 28 votes, while Independent candidate Satish Nandal (63) got 16. Five ballots — four of the Congress and one of the BJP

were declared invalid by the returning officer. With five Congress MLAs allegedly cross-voting, Nandal could have secured Bhatia's 11 second preference votes, reaching 28, had one more Congress legislator cross-voted in the Independent candidate's favour, sources said. Congratulating the winning candidates in a late-night press conference, Chief Minister Saini said, "Nandal lost by just one vote (referring to the narrow difference). Five Congress MLAs cross-vot-

ed. Four of their votes were rejected." The BJP-backed Nandal had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Assembly polls as its nominee. Asked about 'cross-voting' by five of his party MLAs, state Congress chief Rao Narendra Singh told reporters, "Those who betrayed the Congress will face strict action." Congress general secretary in charge of Haryana, B K Hariprasad, also said that action will be taken against the MLAs who cross-voted and "betrayed the party."



Karamvir Singh Boudh and (Right) Sanjay Bhatia

BUDAUN HPCL PLANT KILLINGS

Shops built on govt land by prime accused demolished

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BUDAUN

THE district administration in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun on Tuesday demolished shops belonging to the prime accused in the murder of two Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) officials, citing that the establishments were built on government land.

On March 12, two officials of HPCL plant in Sejni village -- Assistant General Manager Harshit Mishra (34) and General Manager Sudhir Kumar Gupta (58) -- were shot dead allegedly by Ajay Pratap Singh alias Ramu, a local who was earlier a vendor at the plant. Gupta had recently terminated some employees and blacklisted vendors whose work was not satisfactory.

Singh was among those removed. Since the termina-



tion, Singh had been upset with the general manager and had threatened him on several occasions. Dataganj Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Dharmendra Kumar Singh said that all encroachments made by Ajay Pratap Singh and others

had been identified beforehand. Notices were issued to the concerned individuals, granting them time to voluntarily remove the encroachments. However, the illegal structures were not removed even after the stipulated time had elapsed.

On Tuesday, the administration proceeded to remove the illegal structures using bulldozers. He informed that approximately 12 roadside shops had been identified for demolition with about six shops situated on one side of the

On March 12, two officials Assistant General Manager Harshit Mishra (and General Manager Sudhir Kumar Gupta were shot dead allegedly by Ajay Pratap Singh, a local who was earlier a vendor at the plant

road and six on the other. The SDM further clarified that among the demolished structures, six shops belonged to Ajay Pratap Singh while the remaining six belonged to his uncle, Rakesh Singh.

He added that a survey conducted by the Public Works Department (PWD) revealed that the shops had been constructed illegally on government land.

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

Raj to vaccinate 2 cr cattle heads

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

THE Rajasthan government will vaccinate more than two crore cattle heads under the seventh phase of its foot-and-mouth disease control programme, officials said on Tuesday.

The seventh phase of the statewide campaign, which was launched by Animal Husbandry Minister Joram Kumawat from the Ramdev Gauskhala in Bagru near Jaipur, aims to vaccinate 2.32 crore cows and buffaloes across all districts, officials said. Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a contagious viral disease affecting livestock, including cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats, characterised by fever and blister-like sores on the mouth, tongue and hooves. Kumawat appealed to the livestock owners to ensure vaccination of all cattle heads to protect them from the infectious disease.

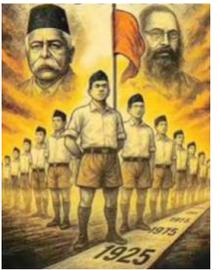
"This will improve animal health and help increase



the income of farmers," he said. According to an official statement, the minister directed the concerned officials and veterinarians to complete the vaccination drive in a time-bound manner to achieve the target of making the state free from the disease by 2030.

Director in the animal husbandry department, Suresh Meena, said FMD is a highly infectious disease that affects the productivity of livestock and causes financial losses to farmers. The officials said teams from the animal husbandry department will carry out door-to-door vaccination drives in the villages and monitor the process continuously to ensure maximum coverage.

RSS conducts 88K 'shakhas' daily

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

THE RSS has witnessed significant expansion in the past year with the number of daily 'shakhas' increasing by around 6,000 to reach more than 88,000, a Sangh leader said. Rashtriya Swamsevaka Sangh (RSS) leader Rameshchandra Agrawal said that the number of locations where Sangh's activities are held has also grown to over 55,000 in the country.

He said that RSS activities have now reached remote regions, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh, besides tribal areas, where regular 'shakhas' are being conducted. Agrawal said that Rajasthan has 12,109 'shakhas' and 5,950 weekly gatherings, while a large number of Hindu conferences have been organised to strengthen outreach in society.

He said that the three-day meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratidinhi Sabha, the highest decision-making body of the RSS, held in Samalkha in Haryana from March 13 to 15, focused on issues of organisational expansion, social harmony and greater participation of society in nation-building. He said that along with organisational expansion, the RSS is also working to enhance social values through its "Panch Parivartan" initiative.

Agrawal said the RSS would organise 96 training camps across the country next year as part of its regular training programmes.



Gunmen open fire at a patient inside hospital

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ALIGARH

TWO armed assailants allegedly walked into a hospital here and fired at a man who was undergoing treatment at the facility, injuring him severely, a senior police official said on Tuesday. Aligarh Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Neeraj Kumar Jadaun told reporters that the victim has been identified as Vedpal (32), a resident of a village in Khair police station area.

He was rushed to Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital following the incident, and his condition remains critical. One person has been arrested in this connection, while a hunt is on to nab the two shooters, he added. Citing information provided by Vedpal's family, the SSP said Vedpal had developed a relationship

with a girl from Mathura and was planning to marry her soon.

However, the girl's family -- including her father, who is a police constable -- opposed this proposal and arranged her marriage elsewhere last month. Despite this, Vedpal continued attempting to contact the girl. He even went to meet her family last month, where he was severely beaten up and warned with dire consequences if he kept pursuing the matter.

According to the family, Vedpal was admitted to a local hospital two days ago to undergo surgery for the injuries sustained during the earlier beating. The SSP said based on CCTV footage, police have identified the attackers; one of them is the girl's brother, also a police constable posted in a neighbouring district.

Surge in pilgrim footfall at religious sites in UP: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW

CHIEF Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said the surge in the number of pilgrims visiting religious sites in Uttar Pradesh reflects both improved infrastructure and deepening public faith, even as it presents challenges for the government.

Addressing a gathering after distributing financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh each to 555 pilgrims of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, he said that earlier only a limited number of devotees could undertake such journeys due to lack of resources, but the situation has changed significantly now. "There was a time when resources were limited and



only a small number of devotees could travel. Today, facilities have improved in Uttar Pradesh and you can see the large number of people coming," the CM said.

In 2025, Adityanath said that around 164 crore pilgrims visited various religious places across the state. The Prayagraj Maha Kumbh alone attracted 66 crore dev-

otes. He noted that places such as Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi, Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya, and Mathura-Vrindavan have witnessed the arrival of

crores of devotees.

"The arrival of such a large number of devotees is both an opportunity and a challenge. The government is making efforts at its level to provide better facilities - be it connectivity, amenities, or arrangements for pilgrims and tourists," the CM said. Highlighting improvements in the past eight to nine years, Adityanath said several facilities have been developed to promote religious tourism, and efforts are ongoing to further enhance them. He emphasised that while visiting religious places, devotion should come first, followed by tourism and then entertainment, to preserve the sanctity and dignity of such sites.

YOUTH MUST MAKE YOGA INTEGRAL PART OF LIFE: DHAMI

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RISHIKESH

UTTARAKHAND Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami stated on Monday that yoga is not merely a form of physical exercise but a holistic way of life, and that the youth should make it an integral part of their lives. The chief minister emphasised that yoga is more than just physical exertion; it is a comprehensive lifestyle practice that serves to connect the individual spiritually with the supreme soul. Urging youth to incorporate yoga into their daily routines, he noted

that young people currently working in various fields often experience fatigue, and yoga can serve as their greatest ally in overcoming this exhaustion. Terming yoga an invaluable legacy of India's "ancient and magnificent spiritual tradition," he remarked that the multi-faceted discipline has today evolved into a robust foundation for healthy living, mental peace and spiritual growth for the entire world. He said that due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts, June 21 is now celebrated globally as International Yoga Day, and today, millions of people across more than 180 countries practice yoga.

HP budget to be tabled in Assembly on March 21

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA

THE Himachal Pradesh budget for the year 2026-27 will be presented in the assembly on March 21, Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania said on Tuesday. Addressing mediapersons, he said there would be 13 sittings in the second phase of the budget session, to be held between March 18 and April 2. In the first phase of the budget session held between February 16 and 18, three sit-

tings were held. Discussions on the budget estimates will take place from March 23 to 25, while deliberations on demands for grants and cut motions are scheduled between March 27 and 30, he said, adding that the discussion on the governor's address would be held on March 18, 19 and 20.

The speaker further said a total of 834 questions has been received, including 665 starred and 169 unstarred questions. Eight issues would be raised under Rule 62 (calling atten-

tion), three under Rule 101 (private member's resolution) and five under Rule 130 (motion for discussion on matters of public interest). Most of the questions asked by the legislators pertain to the Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh Samman Nidhi, the transition of schools from the state board to the CBSE, construction of roads and bridges, detailed project reports (DPRs) for sanctioned roads, and upgradation of colleges, schools, and health institutions within the state.

Inadequate infra, poor medical facilities in overcrowded Pb jails

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

A report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has flagged overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and poor medical facilities in Punjab jails. According to the audit report which was tabled in the state assembly on Monday, the administration took six years to adopt the framework outlined in the model prison manual,

2016 and notify the Punjab Prison Rules, 2022.

Despite recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, overcrowding in jails persisted, said the report. There are 26 jails of various categories in the state: 10 central jails, seven district jails, two women jails at Bathinda and Ludhiana, one borstal jail at Ludhiana, one open air jail at Nabha (Patiala), and five sub jails.

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against the capacity of 23,638 male inmates, the occupancy was 24,101 in 2021-22. Similarly, the occupancy was 28,481 in 2022-23 against the capacity of 23,658 male inmates. The report pointed out that the

problem of overcrowding was a major deterrent in making basic facilities available to the inmates.

Audit of records of the test-checked jails disclosed that among others, prolonged custody of undertrial



prisoners due to missed court hearings and delay in construction or renovation of new jails had notably contributed to the increase in overcrowding year after year, thereby worsening the already inadequate availability of facilities for jail inmates in Punjab.

The government in its response said building additional barracks in existing six jails, and construction of a new high-security jail at Ludhiana and a new district

jail at Mohali were under process and this would increase the authorised capacity. Further, the government said that a weekly review of the jail population was being assessed by the State Level Committee headed by the inspector general (prisons) and on the basis of such reviews, from January 2021 to December 2023, 17,916 inmates had been transferred from overcrowded jails to less crowded ones.