

Current Affairs

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Punjab's Namitbir Singh Walia Becomes International Master in Chess



1. Punjab's Namitbir Singh Walia Becomes International Master in Chess

- **IM Title Achievement:** Namitbir Singh Walia earned the prestigious title of International Master (IM), which is the second-highest honor in chess after Grandmaster, awarded by FIDE.
- **State Significance:** He is only the second player from Punjab to achieve the IM title, marking a significant milestone for chess development in the state, following Dushyant Sharma.
- **Qualifying Performance:** Walia secured his final IM norm at the 3rd Annemasse International Masters Tournament in France, where he finished with an impressive fourth overall position.
- **Hometown and Background:** He hails from Jalandhar, Punjab, and began playing chess at the age of six, showing early talent by becoming the state under-7 champion.
- **Current Status:** Namitbir is currently a student at Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) in Delhi and remains highly active in key international chess events, positioning himself as a strong contender for the Grandmaster (GM) title.



2. Uttar Pradesh to Get 76th District Named Kalyan Singh Nagar

- **76th District Formation:** The new administrative unit, if formally approved, will become the 76th district of Uttar Pradesh, continuing the state's administrative reorganization efforts.



- **Tribute to Former CM:** The district is named Kalyan Singh Nagar as a major tribute to the late former Chief Minister and veteran BJP leader, Kalyan Singh, recognizing his lifelong contribution to state politics and governance.
- **Proposed Merger Area:** The new district will be carved out by merging specific areas from two existing districts: it is primarily proposed to include Atrauli and Gangiri tehsils from Aligarh and Dibai tehsil from Bulandshahr.
- **Historical Connection:** The proposed area holds deep significance to Kalyan Singh's legacy, as Atrauli was his birthplace (Madhauri) and his long-standing assembly constituency, while Dibai was also a core area of his political influence.
- **Administrative Goal:** The move is intended to enhance administrative efficiency and development in the geographically extended and underdeveloped areas of Aligarh and Bulandshahr, making government services more accessible to local residents.

3. World Bank Approves \$280 Million Loan for Kerala's Health System

- **Project Name and Funding:** The loan of \$280 million (around ₹2,400 crore) is for the Kerala Health System Improvement Programme (KHSIP). It is a part of a larger \$400 million initiative, with the remaining funds provided by the state government.
- **Target Population & Focus:** The primary focus is to improve the health and quality of life for 11 million elderly and vulnerable people in the state. This addresses the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and Kerala's rapidly aging population (over 20% elderly).
- **Chronic Disease Management:** A major objective is the digital tracking and treatment of chronic diseases. The program aims to track and support over 90% of registered patients with hypertension and diabetes using individual electronic tracking mechanisms.
- **Home-Based and Emergency Care:** The initiative will establish a home-based care model for bedbound, homebound, and vulnerable elderly patients. It also focuses on strengthening the emergency and trauma care system with a 24/7 network of ambulances and trauma registries.



4. Vessel 'Sindhu' Launches Historic Voyage to Barren Island

- **Maiden Voyage for Tourism:** The voyage of the passenger vessel 'Sindhu' was its maiden round trip launched by the Andaman and Nicobar Administration



specifically to promote adventure and eco-tourism in the islands.

- **Destination:** India's Only Active Volcano: The destination, Barren Island, is home to the only confirmed active volcano in the Indian subcontinent. The trip offers passengers a rare opportunity to view the volcano's glowing crater from a safe distance.
- **Target and Educational Focus:** The vessel, which has a capacity of 500 passengers, sailed near full capacity and included about 125 government school students. This highlights the dual purpose of the initiative: promoting tourism while providing an educational opportunity to learn about the region's unique geological and environmental significance.
- **New Fortnightly Service:** The launch establishes a new fortnightly cruise service from Port Blair (Haddo Wharf/Sri Vijaya Puram) to Barren Island, making the previously inaccessible natural marvel available to the public under a controlled tourism model.
- **Geographical Significance:** Barren Island is located approximately 140 km from Port Blair and sits at the tectonic junction of the Indian and Burmese plates, underscoring its importance as a geological landmark.

5. India's Sujeet Kalkal Wins Gold at U-23 World Wrestling Championships

- **Category and Final Result:** Sujeet Kalkal won the gold medal in the Men's Freestyle 65kg category. He clinched the final bout with a dominant victory by technical superiority (10-0) over Umidjon Jalolov of Uzbekistan.
- **A Rare Indian Gold:** His victory makes him only the fourth Indian wrestler to ever claim a gold medal at the U-23 World Wrestling Championships, joining an elite group that includes Aman Sehrawat, Reetika Hooda, and Chirag Chikkara.
- **India's Only Men's Gold Medal:** The gold was the only medal won by an Indian male wrestler at the championship this year, standing out from the nine-medal total where the women's team performed exceptionally, securing two silvers and five bronzes (and the overall team title).
- **Overcoming Top-Tier Competition:** Kalkal had a tough run, defeating formidable opponents like Bashir Magomedov (a two-time U23 world champion) in the quarter-final and pulling off a thrilling last-second win against two-time U20 world champion Yuto Nishiuchi of Japan in the semi-final.
- **Improving on Past Performance:** The gold medal is a significant career milestone for Kalkal, who had previously won a bronze medal at the same U-23 World Championships in the previous edition, successfully bettering the color of his medal this time.



6. Lando Norris Wins Mexico GP, Takes F1 Championship Lead

- **Championship Lead Reclaimed:** Lando Norris's victory catapulted him into the lead of the 2025 F1 Drivers' Championship. He now leads his McLaren teammate and former leader, Oscar Piastri, by just one point with four races remaining.
- **Dominant Performance:** Norris controlled the race from pole position to the chequered flag, securing a comfortable victory by a massive margin of over 30 seconds ahead of second-place Charles Leclerc. This was his sixth victory of the season.
- **Significance in Title Fight (Three-Way Battle):** This result solidifies the three-way battle for the World Championship. Norris leads with 357 points, Piastri has 356, and reigning champion Max Verstappen (who finished 3rd in Mexico) remains in contention with 321 points.
- **Piastri's Setback:** The championship momentum shifted due to the contrasting performances of the McLaren drivers. While Norris dominated, Piastri struggled from the start and finished 5th, surrendering the championship lead he had held for a significant portion of the season.



7. Vajra Chandrasekera Wins 2025 Le Guin Fiction Prize

- **Winner and Book:** The recipient is Vajra Chandrasekera, a Sri Lankan author, who won the prize for his speculative novel, Rakesfall.
- **Prize Value and Focus:** The award is a prestigious \$25,000 prize given annually to a single work of imaginative fiction that explores critical themes like power, freedom, equity, and non-violence, in line with the legacy of Ursula K. Le Guin.
- **The Novel's Core Theme:** Rakesfall is described by the author and judges as a novel primarily about power, specifically critiquing the "arrogance and undeserved self-belief of the powerful" and the "late capitalism's death drive" in its pursuit of extreme wealth and control.
- **Genre and Acclaim:** The novel is hailed by the judging panel as an "extraordinary achievement in science fiction" and a work that demonstrates "moral clarity and strength," cementing Chandrasekera's position as a powerful new voice in global speculative fiction.
- **Uplifting Global Voices:** Established in 2022, the prize is administered by the Ursula K. Le Guin Foundation and is open to writers globally, specifically



aiming to uplift voices outside dominant literary institutions, which Chandrasekera's win as a Sri Lankan author reflects.

8. NCERT Signs MoU with IIT-Madras to Boost EdTech and Research

- **Alignment with NEP 2020:** The primary purpose of the collaboration is to strengthen educational research, development, and technology integration in line with the vision and goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes technology-infused, inclusive, and quality education.
- **Focus on AI/ML and EdTech:** The partnership will leverage cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to create innovative learning solutions. This includes developing Personalised Adaptive Learning (PAL) tools, gamification, and Extended Reality (XR) content to make learning more engaging.
- **Digital Content and Multilingualism:** A key deliverable is the development and dissemination of high-quality digital educational content. The goal is for all educational books and resources to be "born digital" and made available in 22 Scheduled Languages to support education in a child's mother tongue.
- **Teacher Professional Development (CPD):** The MoU will focus heavily on the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers. IIT-Madras will provide expertise and training on using the new AI-powered pedagogical and technological tools to enhance teaching effectiveness and assessment.



9. Manoj Kumar Das appointed as Chief Secretary of Gujarat

- **New Chief Secretary:** Manoj Kumar Das (IAS, 1990 batch) was appointed as the new Chief Secretary (CS) to the Government of Gujarat, succeeding Pankaj Joshi, who superannuated on October 31.
- **Previous Key Roles:** Before his elevation, Das was serving as the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) to the Chief Minister and was also holding the additional charge of ACS, Home Department. His close association with the Chief Minister's Office was a key factor in his selection.
- **Technocrat Background:** He is a technocrat administrator, holding a B.Tech (Hons.) in Computer Science and Engineering from IIT Kharagpur. This technical background is seen as a strategic advantage for guiding Gujarat's infrastructure and modernization efforts.



- **Extensive Urban & Industrial Experience:** Das has a distinguished career of over 30 years, notably serving as the Municipal Commissioner for cities like Surat and Vadodara, where he earned multiple national awards for urban governance.

10. Thailand's Queen Mother Sirikit passed away

- **Date and Age of Passing:** Queen Mother Sirikit, the Queen Consort of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), passed away on October 24, 2025, at the age of 93. She had been largely out of the public eye since suffering a stroke in 2012.
- **Significance and Title:** She was the Queen Consort for over 66 years, one of the longest-serving in history, and upon her son's accession (King Maha Vajiralongkorn, Rama X), she was formally bestowed the title Queen Mother. Her birthday, August 12, is a national holiday in Thailand, celebrated as Mother's Day.
- **Legacy of Philanthropy and Development:** She was widely revered for her extensive royal projects focusing on rural welfare, poverty alleviation, and the preservation of Thai traditional arts. She founded the SUPPORT Foundation to train villagers in crafts like silk-weaving, helping to revitalize the Thai silk industry.
- **Environmental Champion:** Queen Sirikit was affectionately dubbed the "Green Queen" for her dedicated work in environmental conservation and wildlife protection. Her initiatives included projects to save endangered sea turtles and to demonstrate the economic benefits of preserving forest cover.



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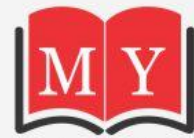
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