



RESTORATION OF MANALI ROAD NEARS COMPLETION

Facing daunting challenges, BRO has restored the damaged 15 km road between Bahang and Buruwa. **P2»**



BRIDGE ON KANGRA-SHIMLA HIGHWAY OPENED

NHA has completed the construction of bridge on the Bathu river and opened it for traffic. **P3»**



WHEN TERROR HAS A PRETTY FACE ON BIG SCREEN

Actresses in bold, cunning & menacing avatars have redefined how we see women villains in movies. **P4»**



IN BRIEF

GUV, CM EXTEND EID GREETINGS

Shimla: Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla and Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday greeted the people of the state, particularly the Muslim brethren, on the occasion of Bakr-Eid. Extending his greetings on the occasion, the Governor said that he hoped the festival would spread the message of peace and love among communities across the world. "I pray to the almighty to fill lives of people with happiness and health," he added. The CM said that he hoped that this festival would further strengthen the bonds of peace, unity and brotherhood. "I pray that the festival spreads the message of goodwill in the society and go a long way in strengthening the unity and integrity among people," he added. **TNS**

KAUL'S 'TRASAADI' AT GAITY THEATRE

Shimla: The audience were left in awe with the outstanding performance of eminent theatre writer-director and film personality Manav Kaul who staged a sob play titled 'Trasaadi' at the Gaity Theatre on Sunday. Written, directed and performed by Kaul, the story of the play revolves around the repentance of a mother's absence, and in that living of repentance, to find one's mother back again. The play and Kaul's performance garnered huge applause from the audience who were mesmerised by Kaul's gripping performance. Trasaadi was presented by aRANYA, a Mumbai based theatre group that was started by a group of friends in the 2004. The theatre group is headed by Manav Kaul himself. This was the 10th show of this solo play. aRANYA has staged successful original plays like, Chuhal, Ilaam, Park, Peele Sooteerwala aadmi, Colour Blind, Shakkar ke Paanch Daane, Bali Aur Shambhu and Tumhaare Baare Mein to name a few. **TNS**

With no place to drive and park, Bhagsunag under tourist siege

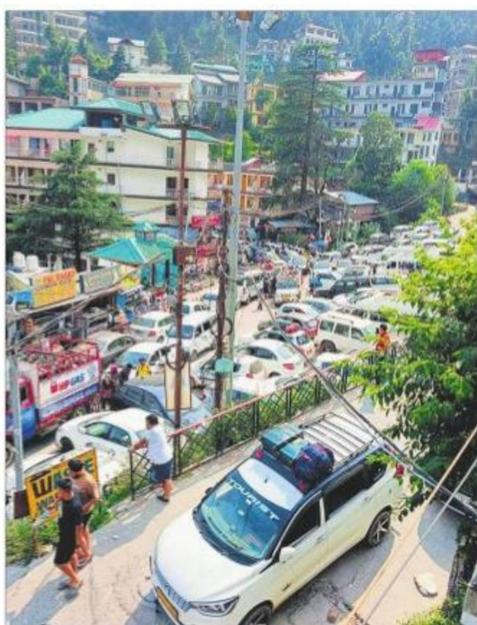
LALIT MOHAN
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

DHARAMSALA, JUNE 16

Heavy and consistent traffic jams have paralysed movement in the Bhagsunag area of Upper Dharamsala. The weekend rush, coupled with the increasing temperatures in the plains, has resulted in an influx of large number of tourists in this area. Tourists are trapped in long queues of vehicles on Mcleodganj-Bhagsunag road.

Vehicles parked along the Mcleodganj-Bhagsunag road have added to the traffic snarls. The locals blamed the local administration's failure to construct multi-storey parking in Bhagsunag to reduce traffic congestion in the area.

Vipin Sharma, a hotelier from Bhagsunag while talking to *The Tribune* said there was space for parking just about 50 vehicles in Bhagsunag. The remaining vehicles get parked along the roads. "The construction of multi-storey parking in Bhagsunag and completion of Bhagsunag-Indrunag road that would create an alternative road for reaching or exiting Bhagsunag area can solve the traffic problem of the area," he said.



A traffic jam in Bhagsunag on Sunday. **KAMALJEET**

INFLUX OF TOURISTS

- Long queues of vehicles on Mcleodganj-Bhagsunag road on weekend
- 10 years on, alternative road connecting it with Indrunag to be completed
- Locals have demanded a multi-storey parking in the open stretch of land

As per information collected by *The Tribune*, the area where vehicles are currently being parked is open forest land. Since there are no trees on that particular patch of land, the locals have been demand-

ing construction of a multi-storey parking. However, the authorities have not got permission from the Forest Department to divert the forest land for parking purposes.

Many hoteliers have also not created enough parking place in their premises for parking. However, the locals claim public parking in the area was necessary and it should be created under the Smart City Dharamsala project.

The project to connect Bhagsunag area with Indrunag has also been lying pending for the past more than 10 years now. The road could not be completed as a bridge needs to be built over a local rivulet. Sources here said that the state government had sent a project to NABARD for securing funds. The sanction for the project is yet to be received from NABARD.

Till a public parking is created in the area and the road connecting Bhagsunag and Indrunag area are completed, the Bhagsunag area that is a major tourist attraction in Dharamsala would continue to jostle with the problem of traffic jams.

5L vehicles cross Shimla in 2 weeks, leaving town choked

NAVNEET RATHORE
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, JUNE 16

More than five lakh vehicles have crossed Shimla, the state's capital and one of the most popular hill stations in the country, in the last two weeks, thanks to the huge inflow of tourists. This includes all types of vehicles entering and exiting the town from all the entry and exit points.

According to police, as many as 5,12,345 vehicles visited the town in the 13 days until Friday, which is a very huge number as compared to the total capacity of the town. On an average, more than 25,000 vehicles are entering and exiting the town on a daily basis.

Shimla Superintendent of Police (SP) Sanjeev Gandhi said that the town witnessed a record number of vehicle inflow in the last two weeks. "The total number of vehicles crossing Shimla has doubled with the town witnessing 100 per cent increase in the vehicle inflow than normal," he said.

He further said that in view of the rise in vehicular traffic, the police has re-implemented the one-minute traffic plan in the town to ease traffic woes. "The one-minute traffic plan was introduced last year and



On an average, more than 25,000 vehicles are crossing Shimla on a daily basis. **TRIBUNE PHOTO**

was a success during the apple season as well as the winter season. The plan was discontinued as number of vehicles decreased in the town and now with the surge in vehicular traffic, the plan has been reintroduced and is generating positive results," said the SP.

The surge in the number of tourists has brought cheers to the hoteliers and business owners of the town. Tourism and hospitality sector in the town was going through a rough phase due to the Lok Sabha elections that were held in seven phases from

April to June. However, over the past two weeks, international and domestic tourists have made a beeline to the town. "Tourists can be seen enjoying in popular tourists spots of the town. Besides Shimla, tourists are also heading towards popular excursion points Kufri, Narkanda, Tanjubar, Naldehra to name a few. President, Shimla Hoteliers and Tourism Stakeholders Association, Mohinder Seth said that the hotel occupancy during the weekends has reached around 80 to 90 per cent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Fire at doorstep, HP minister in action mode to douse flames

PANKAJ SHARMA

NAHAN, JUNE 16

In the midst of an intense heatwave, incidents of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmour district are showing no signs of abating. On late Saturday evening, a sudden blaze erupted near the house of Industries, Labour & Employment, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan, located in Shillai subdivision's Naya village.

Upon noticing the fire near his home, Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan promptly took action. Eyewitnesses reported that the minister, armed with a stick and branches with green leaves, personally fought the fire, a



Industries Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan trying to douse the forest fire in Shillai.

moment captured in a video that quickly went viral. The footage has garnered wide-

spread praise, with many commending the minister for his hands-on approach in battling the flames. Speaking to *The Tribune*, Harshwardhan Chauhan explained how the fire suddenly engulfed the forest near his home.

According to sources, Minister Chauhan was at his residence in Naya village when the fire broke out. Without hesitation, he joined the efforts to control the fire, assisted by local residents. The viral video of the minister actively combating the fire has led to an outpouring of positive reactions on social media, with many people noting that it was rare to see politicians and officials leave their comfort to address such emergencies personally.

In Sync

LALIT KUMAR



Artists perform on the second day of the Shimla Summer Festival on Sunday. **SEE ALSO P3**

Notification issued for Dehra bypoll

DHARAMSALA, JUNE 16

Dehra SDM and Returning Officer Shilpi Bekta has issued notification regarding the byelection in Dehra Assembly constituency of Kangra district.

This also marks the start of the nomination process, but no one filed nomination papers for the Dehra bypoll on the first day of nomination, the SDM said.

She said the nomination process would continue till June 21. During this period, nominations would be filed from 11 am to 3 pm. The Returning Officer further said CCTV cameras would be used to keep a vigil on every activity related to the nomination process. — **TNS**

Himani Chamunda temple in need of repairs, facilities Couple, 15 & 16 years old, found hanging

TRACKING HERITAGE ASI MONUMENTS

RAVINDER SOOD

PALAMPUR, JUNE 16

The ancient Himani Chamunda temple situated at a height of 3000 meters above sea level in the Dhauladhars is in a state of utter neglect. Though the state government had taken over its management ten years ago, no steps have been taken for its renovation and creating facilities for thousands of pilgrims who visit the temple. Himani Chamunda temple can come up as a major attraction for tourists if developed in a planned manner.

Despite repeated assurances given by the govern-



ments, nothing has been done till date. In the absence of any cooperation from the state government, a number of NGOs and charitable institutions are ready to undertake the ren-

ovation work of the temple. However, since the temple is under the control of the state government, it needs the government's approval. Therefore, the issue is hanging fire. Former

Himachal Chief Minister Shanta Kumar, when he was MP from Kangra, had allocated Rs 30 lakh for the construction of a 'sarai' for pilgrims, however the project failed to take off, firstly

IN STATE OF NEGLECT

- A number of NGOs and charitable institutions are ready to undertake the renovation work of the temple. However, since the temple is under the control of the state government, it needs the government's approval, therefore, the issue is hanging fire.
- Former chief ministers Shanta Kumar, Prem Kumar Dhumal, Virbhadra Singh did take initiatives but plans failed to see the light of the day.

<<The temple premises lack basic facilities like water, rain shelter and toilet. **TRIBUNE PHOTO**

in the absence of administrative will and secondly, the time period for fund utilisation announced by the former MP elapsed.

There is neither any rain shelter, nor any toilet facili-

ty for pilgrims. Even the path leading to the temple is in a bad shape. The temple complex is in a shambles and needs immediate repair and renovation. Besides, there is no facility of drinking water available in the temple complex.

Earlier, the Prem Kumar Dhumal government had also constructed a helipad near the temple complex. A heli taxi service was also started but in the absence of political will, the service was discontinued. Later, the Virbhadra Singh government also prepared a DPR for the construction of a ropeway to the temple but failed to get funds from the Centre.

While talking to *The Tribune*, former CM Shanta Kumar said he had brought

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NAHAN, JUNE 16

In a shocking incident, the bodies of a teenage couple were found hanging from a sheesham tree in a forest near Nahana, creating panic in the area.

The police said they received information about the incident on Saturday night, leading to the immediate deployment of security personnel to the site. Forensic teams were also present at the site this morning as the bodies were taken down from the tree and sent for postmortem examination to Dr Yashwant Singh Parmar Medical College and Hospital.

The deceased were identified as Saurav (16), a resident of Matak Majri village, and

Madhubala (15), a resident of Pardooni village.

Prima facie, it appears that the teenaged couple chose a secluded spot near the Ramadhaun road in the Sainji ki Ser Panchayat area to end their lives.

It is thought that they took this drastic step few days ago and the bodies had already reached a decomposed state due to the heat, making it difficult to stand at the site due to the stench. The police said they were treating the case as a probable suicide, but had not ruled out other possibilities. Local villagers reported that the couple reached the remote spot by following a path towards the pipeline, an area rarely visited by people.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Restoration of Manali's Bahang to Buruwa road nears completion

ABHINAV VASHISHT

KULLU, JUNE 16
Despite facing daunting challenges including heavy traffic and relentless inclement weather, the concerted efforts of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) have resulted in achieving the remarkable feat of restoration of the damaged 15-km road between Bahang and Buruwa in Manali. The stretch was damaged at many places due to floods in July last year. The BRO prepared estimates for its repair and work was propelled for quick execution.

Captain Shakil Sheikh, Officer in Charge (OIC) of the 70 RCC expressed satisfaction with the significant levels of completion of civil restoration work, paving way for the commencement of surfacing works, including the blacktopping of the road.

He said, "The arduous task undertaken by the BRO, in continuance with other essential projects, underscores our commitment to enhance infrastructure amidst adversity." He added that concrete RCC protection structures have been constructed to ensure protection from floods.

The residents of the area opined that the restored infrastructure has infused a renewed sense of optimism within the community and it will have a positive impact on the local economy. A local resident Sher Singh said, "The increase in



Repairs being undertaken on a stretch of the Bahang-Buruwa road in Manali; and (right) the road after restoration.

influx of tourists expected as a result of the improved road infrastructure is anticipated to breathe new life into the region's tourism sector, subsequently bolstering economic growth and creating employment opportunities for locals."

Another resident Ayaan said local businesses, including hotels, restau-

rants, and adventure sports operators, were already witnessing a surge in bookings and footfall, indicating a promising trend for the future. He said, "The restoration efforts by the BRO have rekindled hope and enthusiasm for a thriving future among the inhabitants."

The road connects Manali

to Atal Tunnel and also to the Rohtang Pass. The stretch was temporarily restored for passage of single lane traffic as traffic jams had become a prominent feature. The situation had become grim due to the heavy rush of tourists. With the completion of the reconstruction work, the problem of traffic jams will

TO PROTECT FROM FLOODS

- Major civil works on the 15-km stretch have been finished, but tarring of road remains.
- The road connects Manali with Atal Tunnel and the Rohtang Pass.
- Besides, concrete RCC protection structures have been constructed to ensure protection from floods.
- Visitors to the tourist hub will also get relief from traffic jams.

TOURIST INFLUX EXPECTED

"The increase in influx of tourists expected as a result of the improved road infrastructure is anticipated to breathe the new life into the region's tourism sector."

- Sher Singh, LOCAL RESIDENT



Dead tree threatens houses in McLeodganj locality, authorities fail to take action

LALIT MOHAN

DHARAMSALA, JUNE 16
A dried and dead deodar tree has been hanging over the buildings of Tibetans on the McLeodganj-Dharamkot road.

Residents claim that they have written to officials of both the Forest Department and the Dharamsala Municipal Corporation multiple times to remove the dead tree, but no action has been taken by either department.

Area resident Lobsang Dhonden La said the tree had been hanging over his house for over one year. "I have met the Forest Department and MC officials multiple times to get the tree removed. The tree can fall any time and damage by house," he said.

"The monsoon season is approaching and chances of a hanging dead tree falling over the houses of people residing in the vicinity are increasing, but the officials concerned are not doing anything regarding it," he added.

Another resident, Acha Penpa La said it was unfortunate that the authorities were allowing the felling of green trees to clear land for construction, but not allowing the removal of a dead tree threatening many habitations in the area.

The locality is home to many from the Tibetan community, whom the Government of India has allowed to settle in the area.

Gazalla, an environment activist in McLeodganj, told *The Tribune* that many green trees were being cut to raise

Home to members of Tibetan community



The tree that may fall on residential buildings in McLeodganj.

COMPLAINT MARKED TO OFFICER CONCERNED

"I have marked the complaint of residents regarding the dead tree to the civic body's tree officer, who has been directed to take necessary action."

- Zaffer Iqbal, DHARAMSALA MC COMMISSIONER

commercial buildings. The MC was allowing these people to cut green deodar trees, but a dead tree threatening residential buildings for more than a year was not being removed, the environment activist added.

Dharamsala MC Commissioner Zaffer Iqbal said he had marked the complaint of McLeodganj residents regarding the dead tree to the civic body's tree officer, who has been directed to take necessary action.

Beating the heat



These buffaloes found relief from the heat in a pond at Hatu Talai near Narkanda on Sunday. TRIBUNE PHOTO: LALIT KUMAR

Exhibition on Indira Gandhi's legacy held

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, JUNE 16
Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu inaugurated a photo exhibition titled "Indira's Himalach-Towards New Frontiers" at Padam Complex on the Ridge here. He said that the exhibition was held to pay tribute to the pivotal role of Indira Gandhi in the developmental journey of country and her love for HP.

CM said the exhibition depicted Indira Gandhi's contribution towards nation building in the post-independence era. "This exhibition brings new and fresh

"Her (Indira Gandhi's) wish to retire to the hills of Mashobra and her son Rajiv Gandhi's fulfillment of scattering her ashes over the Himalayas highlight her deep-rooted love for Himachal."

- Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, CHIEF MINISTER

aspects of her courageous life, her struggles, her lasting legacy and her close relationship with the people and the state," he said. He further said Indira Gandhi's spiritual bond with Himachal Pradesh was profound. Her wish to retire to the hills of Mashobra and her son Rajiv Gandhi's fulfillment of scattering her

ashes over the Himalayas highlight her deep-rooted love for Himachal.

The photographs in the exhibition are mostly from the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust (IGMT) archives, New Delhi. The narrative captures her life journey through images to her emerging social and political role in the politi-

cal arena until 1966, when she became India's first woman PM. Subsequent sections focus on her life as PM over three terms, 1966-71, 1971-77 and 1980-84, along with her interim years as Opposition leader from 1977-80.

"Indira Gandhi also prioritised education and healthcare, leading to the establishment of prestigious institutions in the state which have grown into pillars of excellence as of now" stated the CM. He also praised Eka Archiving Services for displaying the exhibition featuring a remarkable collection of photographs.

5L vehicles cross Shimla in two weeks, leaving...

FROM PAGE 1
while it was around 40 to 50 per cent during weekdays. Minakshi, a tourist from Delhi who was taking a stroll at the Mall with her husband and children said that Shim-

la was one of her favourite hill stations and she never misses a chance to visit it. "It is an amazing experience to take a stroll with your family on the roads surrounded by lush green pine trees" she said.

Solan's Rishan bags role in TV series

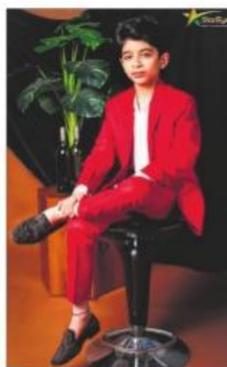
AMBIKA SHARMA

SOLAN, JUNE 16
A ten-year-old Solan boy, Rishan Verma, will showcase his acting skills in popular television series 'Badal pe Paon Hai' being aired on Sony SAB after he secured a continuity role in the popular serial.

Verma bagged this role after a slew of impressive stints in supportive roles on 'Udaariyaan' on Colors TV and 'Dalchini' on Dangal TV.

Hailing from Solan, Rishan has already carved a niche for himself in the entertainment industry. His passion for dance fetched him a junior dance category top slot in 'Himachal Got Talent' in 2022. This victory was a turning point, showcasing his exceptional talent and paving the way for his future pursuits.

Rishan quips, "Getting a continuity role in 'Badal pe Paon Hai' is a dream come true. I've learned immensely from my experiences in the TV industry, and I'm grateful for all the support I've



Rishan Verma

received from all." This year, he became a finalist in the 'Himachal Dance Championship'. Rishan's penchant to delve more into the entertainment industry led to his transition into acting. His acting roles in TV serials enriched his exposure. The 10-year old's ability to connect with the audiences caught the attention of producers, leading to his current role in 'Badal pe Paon Hai.'

Kasauli Week concludes

SOLAN, JUNE 16
The Kasauli Week-2024, hosted by Kasauli Club, concluded today with Dhanush Chaudhary bagging the title of the Kasauli King, while Paridhi Choudhary was declared the Kasauli Queen.

Besides this, Swastik Rai was adjudged the Kasauli Prince and Riya Goel the Kasauli Princess. Col Lokesh Singh (Retd) won the title of Kasauli Emperor, while Kiran Sangha was adjudged Kasauli Empress in an event which was the major attraction of the day.

A glamorous ramp walk was the highlight of the week. The models left the audience awestruck as they walked the ramp to showcase trending designer wear.

Col Randhir Pathania, Secretary, Kasauli Club Limited, said, "Kasauli Week is an annual celebration to provide patrons and attendees a peep into the club's tradition, history and legacy. This year, the week was replete with community activities, sports, music and culture."

Besides, a sapling plantation drive and a beating the retreat by the pipe band were also held. — TNS

WHAT OUR READERS SAY

Is a civic issue bothering you? Are you agitated over the lack of concern? Is there something heartening that you feel needs to be highlighted? Or a picture which in your opinion ought to be seen by many, and not just you?

The Tribune

invites its readers to have their say. Please email at: hpreadersfeedback@tribunemail.com

CONSTRUCTIONS ALONG HIGHWAY RAISE CONCERNS

THE state highway leading from Palampur to the famous Andretta village is witnessing a number of roadside constructions. Many of the owners are flouting the general rule that abstains public from constructing buildings within 25 feet from the edge of state highways. The PWD authorities remain silent spectators to illegal constructions, which are likely to pose problems if the government decides to widen this road in future. Naresh Kumar, PANCHRUKHI

SHOPKEEPERS ENCROACH UPON ROAD TO KANGRA TOWN

LOCAL shopkeepers have encroached upon the road leading to Kangra town, reducing the motorable width of the road. The narrow road has become quite prone to traffic jams as it becomes a challenge to pass through this stretch whenever vehicles are coming from both sides. Even as commuters face inconvenience every day, the authorities have done nothing to remove these encroachments. It is the need of the hour that they conduct an anti-encroachment drive to clear this road. Vaibhav Sharma, KANGRA



SNARL-UPS IRK COMMUTERS

COMMUTERS are having a hard time on the road from Brockhurst to Chhota Shimla as the stretch is witnessing traffic jams almost every morning. It is turned into a one-way passage from 9 am to 10.30 am, yet the traffic movement is quite slow. The authorities concerned should deploy traffic police personnel here and ensure the smooth flow of vehicles. Ravinder, SHIMLA

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The Tribune Voice of the People

NHAI opens bridge, flyover on Kangra-Shimla highway

RAVINDER SOOD

PALAMPUR, JUNE 16
The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has completed the construction of a bridge on the Bathu river and opened it to traffic on the Shimla-Kangra four-lane highway. It has been built under Phase-5B package for the 18.3-km stretch between Kangra and Bhangwar Ranital.

This is one of the longest bridges on this section of the four-lane project. The NHAI has also opened traffic on the Ranital flyover on this part of the highway.

Till date, over 80 per cent construction work of this phase, including bridges on the Bathu river, has been completed. Another big bridge on the Baner river would be made operational in the next six months, claim officials.

The construction of this phase, which had been held up earlier for the want of forest and environment clearances and removal of infrastructure like transmission lines, was awarded to the Gawar Construction Company.

The Shimla-Kangra four-lane highway is one of the strategic road projects that will connect six districts of the state with Shimla.

Meanwhile, the construction of the twin tube tunnels between Daulatpur and Kangra is also in its final stage and likely to be opened for traffic before the



A bridge on the Bathu river, and (below) the Ranital flyover on the Kangra-Shimla highway.

GRID-BASED TECHNOLOGY

“In view of the fragile hills of the state & repeated landslides on highways, the Kangra-Shimla project would be the first in the state to be constructed using grid-based technology. The first lane is constructed on a higher slope and second on a lower slope. This makes a grid of two separate roads running parallel on the hills. It saves hills from vertical cutting, reduces maintenance cost and provide a safe passage.” — Project head



end of 2024.

After the construction of these tunnels, the distance between Daulatpur and Kangra town would be reduced by seven km. The total cost of this package has been estimated to be Rs 1,100 crore.

Abdul Basit, state head of the NHAI, told *The Tribune* that the construction of small culverts on this phase had already been completed, while the construction

of a flyover at the Tanda bypass was in progress.

Basit said the construction of the 225-km highway project between Kangra and Shimla had been divided into five packages. He added that the project was a priority for the NHAI.

The project head said, “Keeping in mind the fragile hills of the state and repeated landslides on highways, the Kangra-Shimla highway project would be

the first in the state to be constructed using grid-based road technology.”

“This will reduce the maintenance cost and provide a safe passage. The grid-based technology saves hills from vertical cutting. The first lane is constructed on a higher slope and the second lane on a lower slope. This makes a grid of two separate roads running parallel on the hills,” the project head said.

80% WORK ON ₹1,100 cr PHASE COMPLETED

Over 80% construction work of the Phase-5B package of the 18.3-km stretch between Kangra and Bhangwar Ranital of the Kangra-Shimla four-lane project has been completed.

The construction of the twin tube tunnels between Daulatpur & Kangra is also in its final stage and likely to be opened for traffic before the end of 2024.

With these tunnels, the distance between Daulatpur and Kangra town would be reduced by 7 km.

The total cost of the Phase-5B package has been estimated to be ₹1,100 crore.



Artistes perform during the Shimla Summer Festival on Sunday. TRIBUNE PHOTOS: LALIT KUMAR

Saaj Bhatt rocks 2nd night of Shimla Summer Festival

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

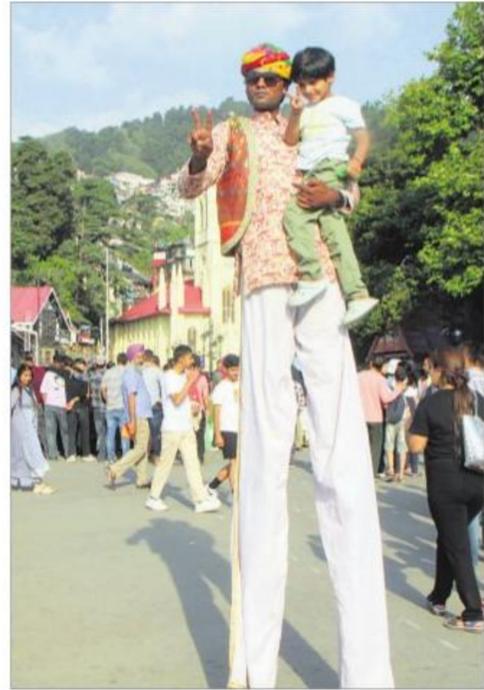
SHIMLA, JUNE 16

The audience could be seen dancing to the tunes of the renowned Bollywood singer Saaj Bhatt, who left locals and tourists spellbound with his performance on the second day of the International Summer Festival-2024, which is being held at the historic Ridge in Shimla.

Singer Anuj Sharma and Honey Negi also entertained the masses. The festival also witnessed various performances by local artists, including Aditya, who is a visually impaired boy.

Locals and tourists were also seen enjoying other activities and meals at the Ridge and the Mall during the festival.

The Speaker of the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Kuldeep Singh Pathania, was the chief guest during the second night of the festival on Sunday.



A performer on stilts carries a child on the Ridge in Shimla.



Attendants at the newly installed token counter at zonal hospital in Mandi. JAI KUMAR

Token machines at Mandi hospital to facilitate patient registration process

DIPENDER MANTA

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

MANDI, JUNE 16

Patients and their attendants visiting the Mandi zonal hospital have a reason to cheer as a private association of senior citizens, Citizens Council Mandi, installed token machines on Saturday using its own funds to ease registration of patients coming for medical checkup.

Neeraj Handa, one of the members of the council said this initiative was made possible through persistent efforts of council head O P Kapoor and hospital officials. Two volunteers will now assist patients

and their caregivers at all times, helping them with token issuance and registration slip for medical checkup to reduce the waiting queues.

“Additionally, benches have been set up for comfortable seating while patients and caregivers wait for their registration slip to be processed. Some benches were provided by the Municipal Corporation, while others were relocated from less used areas within the hospital premises,” he asserted.

Furthermore, the Citizens Council has allocated Rs 1 lakh from its savings for the upkeep

of crematorium Moksha Dharm in Mandi. This contribution was handed over to the NGO Veer Mandal, which maintains cremation grounds, for the maintenance of smoke-free pyre chamber.

Council head OP Kapoor highlighted that funds which remained unutilised from last year’s disaster relief efforts were used for these initiatives. The aim was to establish a dedicated fund for the ongoing local issues, thereby aiding hospital administration and other departments in resolving community challenges effectively, he said.

Education Minister lays stone of community bhawan

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, JUNE 16

Education Minister Rohit Thakur today laid the foundation stone of the community hall at Batad village in Kathasu gram panchayat in Shimla district. He released Rs 10 lakh for its construction.

Thakur also presided over the concluding ceremony of a volleyball tournament in the village. He said along with education, sports played an important role in the lives of youngsters and volleyball was a popular sport in the hills. “Also, sports saves youth from falling into the trap of drug addiction,” he said.

The Minister said the

state government was committed to ensuring all-round development of the state, especially in the Jubbal-Kotkhai Assembly constituency, where development works worth crores of rupees were in progress.

He said that around 100 roads would be metalled this season, and construction worth Rs 71 crore would be done. He further said that the construction work of 66 KV substation had also been completed and a 3-km road at Batad village had been metalled at a cost of Rs 36 lakh.

Earlier, Thakur held a meeting with Congress workers in Kotkhai and thanked them for the lead the party got in the Lok Sabha elections from



Education Minister Rohit Thakur after laying the foundation stone of the community hall building at Batad in Kotkhai on Sunday. TRIBUNE PHOTO

this constituency.

The Minister also met vari-

ous delegations from Kotkhai area and listened to their

problems, assuring them of solving these at the earliest.

FROM PAGE 1

Himani Chamunda temple in..

the matter to the notice of the DC, Kangra, and also the then Urban Development Minister Sudheer Sharma, who represents the area. Sharma had promised to extend all help for the development of the ancient monument situated at a height of 10,000 feet, but nothing has

been done till date resulting in inconvenience to the thousands of pilgrims who visit the temple.

Shanta Kumar has now requested Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who has promised to make Kangra a tourism capital of the state, to intervene and

to announce a special financial package for the development of Himani Chamunda from the ADB funds. He has also asked the Chief Minister to constitute a high-level committee of officers so that the temple is developed in a better way and pilgrims are benefited.

Does state have disaster mitigation plan ready for this monsoon?

RAVINDER SOOD

PALAMPUR, JUNE 16

After last year’s flash floods resulting in massive devastation in the state, several organisations, NGOs, environmental groups and public bodies had raised the demand for the setting up a ‘Disaster Mitigation Action Plan’ before the onset of monsoons this year to cope with the natural disasters that have become a recurring phenomenon.

The lukewarm attitude and irresponsible behaviour of the official machinery and their failure to enforce envi-

ronment laws have been major roadblocks in turning the action plan onto a reality.

The TCP Act, labour laws, and environmental laws are held to ransom by construction companies and industrial houses to make fast buck. Despite the fact that Himachal falls in seismic zone (V), the ban on high-rise buildings is being flouted not only by the public but government agencies also. Moreover, the government and law-enforcing agencies have their hands tied waiting for the orders of the courts to come into action.

Hydropower firms, cement plants & four-laning projects played havoc with natural ecosystem

Unfortunately, like Uttarakhand, the state has put environment protection laws at the lowest rung and allowed power companies and cement plants to play havoc with Nature. Unless and until the environmental laws are not followed strictly the tragedies are bound to repeat in Himachal.

The fragile natural ecosystem of the state has received a major blow over the years with the exploita-

tion of 22000 MW hydro electrical potential in the state, 2000 thousand million tons of limestone being quarried for cement plants and construction of major four-lane projects in the state. Most parts of Mandi, Kinnaur, Kullu, Shimla and Chamba districts have become prone to large scale landslides and flash floods because of reckless cutting of hills, blasting of rocks and deforestation to make

way for power projects.

It may be recalled that Himachal falls among the first five disaster prone states of the country vis-a-vis natural hazards like earthquakes, flash floods triggered by cloudbursts, landslides, avalanches and forest fires.

In the devastating monsoon in 2023, over 500 human lives were lost and property worth Rs 10,000 crore was damaged or washed away. The loss of livestock, natural wealth including forest cover (trees) and fertile soil accounts for over Rs 1800 crore.

In the last ten years, over forty major cloudbursts and flash floods were reported from different parts of the state in which over 4,000 human lives were lost, and property worth Rs 25,000 crore was damaged or got washed away.

The disaster of the intensity and magnitude as last year must force the state to rethink and evolve a strategy to combat the aftermath of natural disasters and put a well-devised disaster mitigation plan (fully functional at the grassroots level) into the action wherever the need arises.



During the 2023 monsoon, over 500 lives were lost and property worth Rs 10,000 crore damaged or washed away in HP. FILE PHOTO



BRIDE ON BOARD

Bride-to-be Amy Jackson celebrated her bachelorette party with her friends on a private jet in France. She wore a chic white suit, sun hat and netted white gloves.

Shoot-ready

Salman Khan will soon begin filming his next film *Sikandar*. The film marks the reunion of Salman Khan and Sajid Nadiadwala. Directed by A.R. Murugadoss, the film is set to release next Eid.

HIMACHAL | MONDAY | 17 JUNE 2024

These actresses in bold, cunning and menacing avatars have redefined how we see women villains on the big screen

When **terror** has a pretty face



In an industry often dominated by heroic narratives, a select few female actors have turned the tables, bringing depth, nuance, and unforgettable charisma to their villainous roles. These performances not only challenge the stereotypes of female characters in cinema but also showcase the extraordinary range and talent of these actresses.

Here's a closer look at some remarkable performances where leading ladies have owned the screen as the antagonists.

MEET THE SORCERESS

Mouni Roy – *Brahmastra: Part One – Shiva*
Mouni Roy's role as the dark sorceress Junoon in *Brahmastra* marked a significant departure from her earlier roles. Known for her work in television, Roy embraced the challenge of playing a powerful and sinister villain with remarkable ease. Her portrayal of Junoon, a character driven by ambition and darkness, was both visually and emotionally impactful.

RUTHLESS & VULNERABLE

Vidya Balan – *Ishqiya* & *Neeyat*
Vidya Balan is known for her unconventional roles, and her performances in *Ishqiya* and *Neeyat* are perfect examples of her fearless approach to acting. In *Ishqiya*, Bal-

an played Krishna, a widow with a mysterious and dangerous side. Her nuanced performance brought a blend of vulnerability and ruthlessness, making Krishna an unforgettable character. In *Neeyat*, Vidya stepped into the shoes of a cunning and calculating villain with aplomb.

MASTER OF THE GAME

Tabu – *Andhadhun* & *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*
Tabu has long been celebrated for her versatility, and her roles in *Andhadhun* and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* have solidified her status as a masterful villain. In *Andhadhun*, she played Simi, a morally ambiguous character whose actions drove the film's suspenseful plot.

In *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*, Tabu took on a dual role, showcasing her exceptional range. Her portrayal of the vengeful spirit Manjulika was a tour de force. She blended horror and empathy in a way that few could achieve. Her performance was both haunting and poignant.

COMIC & CHARISMATIC

Richa Chadha – *Fukrey*
Richa Chadha's portrayal of Bholi Punjaban in the *Fukrey* film series is a testament to her incredible acting prowess. As the tough and



Tabu

Richa Chadha

street-smart antagonist, Richa brought a blend of humour and menace to the role, making Bholi Punjaban a memorable character. Her performance was marked by a perfect balance of comedic timing and ruthless determination, endearing her to audiences while also keeping them on edge. Richa's charismatic performance was a key factor in the success all three parts of *Fukrey*. — Dharam Pal

SECRET WEAPON

Konkona Sen Sharma – *Killer Soup*
Konkona Sen Sharma's performance in *Killer Soup* was a masterclass in understated menace. Known for her critically acclaimed roles in independent cinema, Sharma brought a quiet but terrifying presence to her character. Her portrayal of a seemingly benign individual who hides a dark and deadly secret was both chilling and compelling.



GIRL DAD

Varun Dhawan shares first photo of daughter as he celebrates Father's Day

Actor Varun Dhawan welcomed his first born, a baby girl, with wife, Natasha Dalal on June 3. On Sunday on the occasion of Father's Day, he posted an adorable first glimpse of his baby girl. He is seen holding his daughter's tiny hand and in another picture holding the paw of his pet dog, Joey.

The post is captioned, "Happy Father's Day. My father taught me that the best way to celebrate this day is by going out there and working for your family, so I'll be doing just that. Couldn't be happier to be a girl dad." The post left the internet in awe of Varun's love for his new-born daughter.

The 'new' dad is set to play the lead in *Baby John*, an action drama directed by Kales. — IANS

'It means the world'

Emilia Clarke on starring in *GOT* and the love she receives for it even today

Game of Thrones star Emilia Clarke recalled starring in the iconic series in which she portrayed Daenerys Targaryen. She shared that it, 'means the world' and fans have showered so much love and appreciation to the series that she feels more attached to it.

She said, "The more distance I have from *GOT*, the more I can quantify it. When I started, I didn't know what I was doing. Now, as more and more time goes between it and me doing it, the more I'm like, that was incredibly special and that was incredibly rare." The fantasy drama ran for eight seasons from 2011 to 2019.

— ANI



Mouni Roy

Vidya Balan

Konkona Sen Sharma

MOVIE REVIEW

Sonam shines in this rom-com

Film: *KUDI HARYANE VAL DI*

Director: Rakesh Dhawan

Cast: Ammy Virk, Sonam Bajwa, Yashpal Sharma, Yograj Singh, Ajay Hooda, Hardeep Gill, Honey Mattu, Seema Kaushal, Mahabir Bhullar and Manpreet Dohly

Rating: ★★

SHEETAL

Punjabi cinema has become inclusive and the latest theatrical offering, *Kudi Haryane Val Di*, is an example. With Ammy Virk and Sonam Bajwa as his lead actors, writer-director Rakesh Dhawan shifts his focus on the villages of Haryana. The director-actor duo, Rakesh and Ammy, earlier gave a hit film, *Aaja Mexico Chaliye* (2022). In *Kudi Haryane Val Di*,

Ammy plays Shivjot, who comes from a family of pehalwans but has never stepped inside an akhada. Destiny plays its part and he is forced to accompany his father's students to Haryana for a wrestling match. There he meets Neelam (Sonam), a daughter of a pehalwan (Yashpal Sharma), and promptly falls in love with her. There's no love story without obstacles and here we have many. This comedy of error sticks initially but drags on after some time and we can't help but wait for the interval. The story is predictable and the screenplay is a tad too lengthy. The subplot involving Yograj Singh is supposed to provide us with comic relief but unfortunately, it doesn't. The director's effort to give us a climax along the lines of popular comedy films such as *Hera Pheri* and *Hungama* falls flat.

Kudos to Sonam Bajwa for nailing the Haryana girl Neelam's character. To play a

daughter to veteran actor Yashpal Sharma, who is a true-bred Haryanvi, needs proper homework, especially with diction and dialect, and Sonam does a convincing job. Ammy plays his usual self, a Punjabi *munda* who wears his heart on his sleeve. He chases his girl and wins our hearts while doing that. Ammy with his punches and comic timing stands out from the rest. There are moments that evoke genuine laughter.

The background music does nothing to enhance the viewing experience. Even the songs are average — rather forgettable, except for one song which is filmed on Sonam in a Haryanvi folk dress. Sonam has definitely earned some Haryanvi fans with this one. It's a one-time watch, for the effort of the director and the actors to bring something new.



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