

HIMACHAL CABINET APPROVED SHITALPUR TOWNSHIP PROJECT ON DECEMBER 30, 2025

37 hectares of new township area falls in ecological restoration land

A forest department officer says area identified for the afforestation also exists in the same portion

Saurabh Parashar
Shimla, February 14

THE STATE government's decision to develop a world-class township along the Himachal-Chandigarh border at Shitalpur has come into direct conflict with the utilisation of Rs 1.08 crore Environmental Compensation (EC) collected on the directions of National Green Tribunal (NGT) from the violators in a case of rampant illegal mining in the same area.

The Himachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board (HPSPCB), which is the executing agency for utilisation of the EC recovered from more than 21 violators, has informed the tribunal that a substantial portion of the land including 37 hectares identified for ecological restoration falls within the area where the state Cabinet approved the township project on December 30, 2025. The HPSPCB placed this submission, urging the NGT to grant more time to submit a revised plan before the Principal Bench of the tribunal in New Delhi, on February 11.

Interestingly, the NGT had directed the HPSPCB to submit an action plan for the utilisation of the collected environment compensation of Rs 1.08 crore on May 1, 2025. On this directive, the state pollution panel submitted an action plan report before the tribunal on July 10 last year, almost five months before the decision to develop the township at Shitalpur in Baddi.

In its February 11 reply submitted through the Assistant Environment Engineer Abhay Gupta, HPSPCB stated, "The proposal for utilisation of environmental compensation was prepared in consultation with

the forest department. As per the proposal, the restorative work consisted of construction of 142 number of check dams including 118 dry stone check dams and 24 crate wire check dams; crate wire retaining walls at nine sites for stabilisation of soil and the plantations on 37 hectares of land at various places of the affected areas including Shitalpur, Kalyanpur, Landewal and Kenduwal."

"The matter was further taken up by HPSPCB with the concerned stakeholder departments so that the action plan could be materialised/executed. However, on February 4, a communication received from the SDM Baddi appraising that the Cabinet of Himachal Pradesh has approved a new township in the Shitalpur area and it is the same area where the action plan for providing afforestation, crate wall and check dams were proposed by the forest department. It was further apprised that some of the land has been transferred to HIMUDA (Himachal Pradesh Housing and Urban Development Authority) and the case for finalising additional land to be diverted is under consideration and case shall be submitted for Cabinet approval. The process shall consume some time and a revised plan for providing afforestation, crate wall and check dams may be submitted by the forest department."

A forest department officer requesting anonymity told *The Indian Express*, "Although the matter is subjudice, we received a communication from the HPSPCB urging us to make a revised plan on February 5. We were also informed that the area which we identified for



On April 22 last year, Himachal Police seized 7 excavators and other vehicles for illegal mining at Baddi. FILE

“The Cabinet of Himachal Pradesh has approved a new township in the Shitalpur area and it is the same area where the action plan for providing afforestation, crate wall and check dams were proposed by the forest department”

ABHAY GUPTA
ASSISTANT ENVIRONMENT ENGINEER, HPSPCB (IN A REPLY TO NGT)

the afforestation also falls within the land where a new township was proposed. Making a revised plan is a lengthy process."

The case originates from a 2024 complaint filed by a local resident, Vijay Chandel, before the NGT alleging large-scale illegal mining and excavation at Shitalpur using heavy ma-

chinery such as excavators and tipplers. The complaint also alleged uprooting of trees, damage to Shitalpur road causing inconvenience and safety hazards to commuters, and illegal sale of excavated soil to the railways.

Acting on the complaint, the tribunal constituted a Joint Committee comprising representatives of the Geological Wing of the Department of Industries, the Deputy Commissioner Solan, and the Divisional Forest Officer, Solan. The committee confirmed illegal muck excavation and recommended identification of violators and imposition of environmental compensation.

Subsequently, around 25 challans were issued by police and mining authorities, and notices were served by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate for recovery of EC totalling Rs 1.08 crore. When recovery from defaulters did not materialise fully, the tribunal directed the state government to deposit the amount from the District Mineral Fund by March 30, 2025. The amount was thereafter deposited with the Department of

Environment, Science & Technology and Climate Change on April 2, 2025.

The NGT also had directed the State Pollution Control Board to prepare an action plan for utilisation of the recovered compensation. In compliance, a proposal for plantation, construction of dry-stone dams, crate-wire dams and related ecological works in the Baddi forest range was submitted by the Divisional Conservator of Forests, Nalagarh.

In its latest proceedings on December 17 last year, the NGT has sought a status report on utilisation of the compensation amount. However, with the township project now approved over the same land parcel, execution of the planned afforestation and soil conservation works has been put on hold pending land finalisation and preparation of a revised environmental restoration plan.

The Board informed the tribunal that the matter is being taken up with the concerned departments to ensure proper utilisation of the environmental compensation amount.

Second term: Penpa Tsering to take oath as Sikyong of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

To take oath as president of Central Tibetan Administration on May 27

Express News Service
Chandigarh, February 14

PENPA TSERING will take oath as Sikyong, or president of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), for a second five-year term on May 27, after securing more than 60 per cent of the votes and being declared the winner.

The Election Commission of the CTA announced the results of the preliminary election for the Sikyong and members of the 18th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on Friday. In accordance with Article



Penpa Tsering

67(4) of the Election Rules and Regulations stipulating that "if a candidate secured more than 60 per cent of the total votes in the preliminary round, the final round shall not be conducted, and the candidate shall be declared elected as Sikyong," the Election Commission declared Tsering, the incumbent Sikyong, as the Sikyong for the 17th Kashag, as he received 61.025 per cent of the total votes. "The Election Commission disclosed that a total of 51,140

Tibetans participated in the Sikyong election, with 103 candidates contesting. Following the incumbent Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Kelsang Dorjee Aukatsang and Tsering Phuntsok secured 17,843 and 159 votes respectively," CTA's Election Commission announced.

The Election Commission had declared 30 shortlisted candidates each from the three traditional provinces of Tibet—six candidates each from the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion, North and South America, and Europe and Africa; and three candidates from Australasia (excluding India, Nepal, and Bhutan).

The election commissioner further announced that candidates for the 18th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile must confirm their candidature by February 27 by submitting a letter of confirmation to the Election Commission through their respective local election commission.

Who is Penpa Tsering, CTA's Sikyong: Steering Tibetan govt-in-exile through global advocacy and domestic renewal

Varinder Bhatia
Chandigarh, February 14

THE DEMOCRATICALLY elected Sikyong (president) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Penpa Tsering, has emerged as a central figure in the ongoing effort to keep the Tibetan cause alive on the global stage and strengthen the political and cultural fabric of Tibetans in exile.

He won a second term as Sikyong in the preliminary round of voting, which concluded on Friday, and secured over 60 per cent of the total votes polled, leaving no requirement for any further rounds of voting. He shall be taking the oath for his second five-year term as Sikyong on May 27.

Born in 1967 in the sprawling Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement in Karnataka - home to one of the largest Tibetan refugee communities in India - Penpa Tsering's life has been shaped by the legacy of exile and the struggle for identity and rights. His parents, like many others in the settlement, were once farmers who had fled the Chinese occupation of Tibet in search of refuge and dignity in India. Growing up as one of nine siblings -- three brothers and six sisters -- he witnessed firsthand the challenges and resilience of displaced Tibetan families.

From an early age, Penpa's scholastic promise and leadership abilities stood out. After completing his primary education locally, he attended the Central School for Tibetans, Bylakuppe, where he topped the merit list in his Class XII examinations, demonstrating academic excellence and discipline. He then pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Economics at Madras Christian College in Chennai, graduating with honours in 1988. Even during his college years, Penpa was deeply involved in community activism, serving as General Secre-

tary of the Tibetan Freedom Movement and the Nigerian-Tibet Friendship Association, reflecting his early commitment to advocacy and international engagement.

Political career: From parliament to presidency

Penpa Tsering's formal political journey began in 1996 with his election to the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, the legislative body of the CTA. Known for his calm demeanour, articulate speech, and deep understanding of parliamentary procedure, he was re-elected in 2006, earning the confidence of his peers. This experience paved the way for his appointment as Speaker of Parliament in 2008, a role he would hold for two consecutive terms until 2016. During this period, the CTA navigated significant democratic reforms, including the historic transfer of political authority from the spiritual leadership of the 14th Dalai Lama to elected Tibetan representatives.

In 2016, Tsering expanded his diplomatic experience by serving as the Representative of the Dalai Lama and the CTA to North America, based at the Office of Tibet in Washington, DC. In this capacity, he engaged with U.S. policymakers, members of Congress, diaspora communities, and advocacy groups to raise awareness about Tibet and galvanise political support across party lines.

Although he narrowly lost the Sikyong election that same year, he returned to public life with renewed focus. In the 2021 CTA general election, Penpa secured a decisive victory and was sworn in as Sikyong on 27 May 2021, succeeding Lobsang Sangay. His presidency has been characterized by steadfast promotion of the Middle Way Approach - a policy of seeking

genuine autonomy for Tibet within China through peaceful dialogue - alongside concerted efforts to bolster the welfare of Tibetans in exile.

Achievements and recognition

Under his leadership, the CTA pursued stronger institutional governance, financial transparency, and the preservation of Tibetan language, culture, and education among younger generations. Tsering has also been a vocal advocate for the release of political prisoners and for sustainable engagement with international partners.

In 2024, he was awarded the Democracy Service Medal by the National Endowment for Democracy, a U.S.-based institution, in recognition of his lifetime commitment to democratic governance and human rights advocacy on behalf of the Tibetan people.

Global tour and current engagements

Currently, Sikyong Penpa Tsering is on an official US-Europe diplomatic tour that began in late January 2026, marking one of his most extensive outreach efforts abroad. The itinerary that includes strategic engagements in Washington, Geneva, and Budapest was designed to deepen dialogue with foreign governments, think tanks, diaspora organisations, and human rights groups on Tibet's political aspirations and the challenges facing Tibetans under Chinese rule. According to CTA officials, he is scheduled to return to Dharamshala on February 15, 2026.

The tour follows months of domestic activity aimed at unifying Tibetan communities worldwide and preparing for the upcoming electoral cycle, which has seen Penpa Tsering reaffirmed as a broadly supported leader among Tibetans in exile.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

6 arrested for possessing leopard claws, canines get bail

Saurabh Parashar
Shimla, February 14

IN A setback to the Himachal forest department, all six suspects including the woman arrested for possessing 85 leopard claws and 6 leopard canines and feathers of protected birds have been granted conditional bail. The development comes despite the forest department not ruling out the possibility of seizure of animal body parts, part of an organised crime network.

The six suspects, including a woman, were granted bail on February 13. One of the suspects, Praveen Chauhan, who was in two-day forest custody, was granted bail on February 14. All the six individuals, including five jewellers were arrested from their jewellery shops at Rohru under various sections of Wild Life Protection Act, 1972 during the 'Operation Clawing Back'.

HP: Mother-son duo among four killed after car falls in gorge

Shimla: As many as four people including a woman and her son were killed, while one person injured after a car fell in a deep gorge at Bhabanagar in Kinnaur district on Saturday.

The victim mother and son were identified as Krishna Devi, 42, and her son Himesh Kumar, 19, residents of Jani Nicharin Kinnaur. Two other victims were identified as Sushma Devi, 47, and Inder Lal, 30.

The incident took place around 7 pm on Jani link road, which linked the Bhabanagar subdivision with the Gram Panchayat Jani Nichar. Police said preliminary investigation suggests that the victims were riding in a car which was on its way from Tapri village to Gram Panchayat Jani Nichar.

Police said preliminary investigation has ruled out the possibility that the car was hit by another vehicle.

**PUNJAB & SIND BANK**
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

BRANCH OFFICE :
S.C.O. 76, Sector 5, Panchkula

POSSESSION NOTICE FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
Whereas the Undersigned being "Authorized Officer" of **PUNJAB & SIND BANK, Sector 5, Panchkula**, Under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act No. 54 of 2002) and in Exercise of power conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 Security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Issued a **demand notice** date under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act 2002 calling upon the following borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) to repay the amount mentioned in notice within 60 days of the date of receipt of the said notice.
The Borrower having failed to repay the amount notice is hereby given to the borrower/ guarantors/ mortgagors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Possession** of the property described here below in Exercise of the power conferred on him/ her under section 13(4) of said ACT read with rule 8 & 9 of said rule.
The Borrower/guarantors in particular & the public in general is here by cautioned not to deal with the said property and dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Punjab & Sind Bank, Sector 5, Panchkula**, for an Amount mentioned here in below, besides interest and other charges/ expenses against Calling Account.
The borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s) attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset(s).

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Description of Immovable Property	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession	Amount as per Demand Notice
Borrower(s): 1. M/s J.K. Matting House Private Limited, Business address: SCF 242, Motor Market, Manimajra, Chandigarh-160101 (Borrower). 2. Sh Vijay Singh S/o Sh. Jai Dev Singh, Business address: SCF 242, Motor Market, Manimajra, Chandigarh-160101 (Borrower). 3. Sh Vijay Singh S/o Sh. Jai Dev Singh, R/o House No.779, First Floor, Sector 26, Panchkula, Haryana- 134113. (Through its Guarantor) 4. Smt Reena Singh W/o Sh. Vijay Singh, Business address: SCF 242, Motor Market, Manimajra, Chandigarh-160101 (Through its Director). 5. Smt Reena Singh W/o Sh. Vijay Singh, House No.779, First Floor, Sector 26, Panchkula, Haryana-134113 (Through its Guarantor). 6. Sh Jai Dev Singh S/o Sh. Baru Singh, R/o House No.779, First Floor, Sector 26, Panchkula, Haryana-134113. (Through its Guarantor)	Equitable mortgage of property owned by 1. Sh Vijay Singh S/o Sh. Jai Dev Singh, Business address: SCF 242, Motor Market, Manimajra, Chandigarh-160101. 2. Smt. Reena Singh W/o Sh. Vijay Singh, Business address: SCF 242, Motor Market, Manimajra, Chandigarh-160101. 50% share of free hold buildup of SCF No. 242, Motor Market, Manimajra, Chandigarh (With possession of Basement and Ground Floor) vide registered sale deed bearing indenture no. 4653 dated 08.01.2015 in the name of Sh. Vijay Singh S/o Jai Dev Singh and Mrs. Reena Singh W/o Vijay Singh. Bounded as:- On the North by: SCF No.243. On the South by: SCF No.241. On the East by: Others Property. On the West by: Road/Parking Area.	01.12.2025	09.02.2026	Rs. 1,03,47,339.18 (Rupees One Crore Three Lakh Forty Seven Thousand Three Hundred Thirty Nine & Paise Eighteen Only) as on 29.11.2025 plus interest and incidental expenses incurred by Bank w.e.f. 29.11.2025.

DATE : 14.02.2026

Place: Panchkula

AUTHORIZED OFFICER

**Radico**
SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE
Presents
EXPRESS Aqda
Co-presented by
360 NE

**Karan Johar**
Filmmaker
Dharma Productions

**Anant Goenka**
Executive Director
The Indian Express Group

**ALTMAN**
CEO, OpenAI

18th February | Watch Live  @indianexpress

**The Indian EXPRESS**
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Associate Partners

**ICFAI GROUP** | **CHITKARA UNIVERSITY** | **FRR IMMIGRATION**

