

Shimla Winter Carnival: Shimla Winter Carnival postponed for six days, now starting from January 2 and running till January 8



Diary Times Desk : Shimla Winter Carnival has been postponed for six days due to the demise of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. There will be no cultural programs in the capital till January 1. Artists from various districts who reached Shimla for the Winter Carnival have also been sent back. However, the Winter Carnival will start again after January 2. It will now run till January 8. According to the schedule prepared earlier, the Winter Carnival was to be organized till January 2, but now after the sudden cancellation of the program, the Winter Carnival has been extended till January 8. According to the Municipal Corporation administration, due to national mourning, all the programs to be held from Friday to January 1 have been postponed. All the participants have also been informed about this. The Municipal Corporation is now preparing a new schedule for the Winter Carnival. There will be no change in the program of January 2 at the moment. The performances will be held on this day as per the previously scheduled program. Punjabi singer Satinder Sartaj will participate in the Star Night. Apart from this, the programs cancelled for six days will be held from January 3 to 8. Its complete schedule will also be released soon.

Himachal Weather: Snowfall begins in Himachal, minimum temperature in Tabo -12.1 degree Celsius; cold wave alert

Diary Times Desk : After a week, the weather has changed again in Kullu district and Lahaul valley. The problems of the residents of the district who are already facing difficulties will be further troubled. Snowfall has started in the high peaks including Rohtang, Kunjam Pass since Friday morning. The district administration has issued an alert and instructed tourists not to go towards Rohtang Tunnel and Jalori Pass. After the snowfall in the last few days, about 15 bus routes in Kullu and Lahaul district have been affected and about 15 roads have been blocked for four days. Snowfall has also started in Narkanda of Shimla. So far, two inches of fresh snowfall has been recorded in Narkanda.

"Amritsar Breakfast, Lunch In Lahore": Pak Leader On Manmohan Singh's Dream

Agencies : Pakistan's former foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri recalled fond memories of his association with the late Indian prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who died in Delhi on Thursday night. In an interview with PTI in Lahore on Friday, Mr Kasuri said that Dr Singh will be remembered in history as a man who devoted himself to the improvement of bilateral relations between the two countries. Mr Kasuri, 83, who served as Pakistan's foreign minister from November 2002 to November 2007, credited Singh for the creation of a congenial atmosphere in the entire SAARC region. He said it was best exemplified by Mr Singh's statement that "he looked forward to the day when it would be possible to have breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore and dinner in Kabul". Mr Kasuri said he was lucky to be a part of a process in which unprecedented progress was made during the peace negotiations between the two countries. He said people-to-people contacts were enhanced tremendously during Mr Singh's tenure as prime minister resulting in the creation of mutual trust.



Russia's Putin recalls Manmohan Singh's role in elevating India-Russia ties

Agencies : Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday described former prime minister Manmohan Singh as an outstanding statesman and recalled his contribution in elevating India-Russia ties to a 'special and privileged strategic' partnership. In a condolence message, Putin said Singh accomplished a lot in promoting India's economic development and asserting its interests on the world stage. The strategic partnership between India and Russia was elevated to the level of 'special and privileged strategic partnership during the visit of the Russian president to India in December 2010. Singh, who served as the prime minister from 2004 to 2014 and widely known as the architect of India's economic reforms, died on Thursday night. He was 92. "As prime minister and when serving in other high-ranking positions, he accomplished a lot in promoting India's economic development and asserting its interests on the world stage," Putin said.

Stampede case: Pushpa-2 actor Allu Arjun appears before court virtually

Agencies : Top Telugu actor Allu Arjun, an accused in the case booked over the death of a woman in a stampede here during the premiere of his latest film 'Pushpa-2', appeared through a video conference before a local court on Friday. The regular bail petition filed by the actor, who was named as accused no 11 in the case, came up for hearing on Friday, and the police sought time on the matter after which the court posted it to December 30. Allu Arjun was arrested on December 13 in connection with the incident and produced before the Nampally court, which remanded him to a 14-day judicial custody.

Bengaluru metro to extend operational timings on New Year night, MG Road station to stay shut after 11

Agencies : Bengaluru's Namma Metro announced that the metro operations on New Year night will be extended till 2 am for the convenience of commuters. It also said that the MG Road metro station will be closed after 11 pm on December 31 as there is a chance of getting overcrowded. In an announcement, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) said, "We are pleased to announce extension of metro train timings on the Purple and Green Lines for the New Year's Eve, 2025. The last train will depart from all terminal stations at 02:00 AM on January 1, 2025, while the final train from Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Metro Station (Majestic) will leave at 2:40 AM." After 11 pm, trains will be available with 10-minute frequency and people travelling from the Central Business District are advised to take Cubbon Park.

Manmohan Singh Death: Two-day holiday declared in Himachal Pradesh on the demise of former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh has declared a two-day holiday in the state on 27 and 28 December on the demise of former Prime Minister of the country Dr. Manmohan Singh. During this period, all the offices, boards, corporations and educational institutions of the state government will remain closed. Also, daily wage employees will also be given leave with salary for these days. In the orders issued by Praveen Kumar Tak, Joint Secretary, Home Department of Himachal Pradesh, it has been written that the Central Government has declared state mourning for seven days from 26 December to 1 January on the demise of former PM Manmohan Singh. After the announcement of the government, now the employees from schools, colleges and government offices have headed towards their homes. The Himachal Pradesh government has declared a two-day holiday in the state on 27 and 28 December.



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SDM Kullu Viral Video: SDM Kullu registered a case regarding the viral video, know what is the whole matter

Diary Times Desk : A video of SDM Kullu is becoming increasingly viral on social media. In this, the SDM is sitting in a car with a friend. During this, some youths are seen arguing with him about something. The youths are talking about hitting a vehicle. Regarding this, the youth are seen stopping the SDM's car and arguing with him. However, the video is said to be three-four days old of Parvati Valley. In such a situation, SDM Kullu Vikas Shukla has come forward on Friday regarding the viral video. He said that he came to know from social media that a video of him is going viral. He said that the video is of a few days ago. He said that the administration had removed about 200 illegal encroachments in Kasol a few days ago. Some people were protesting in this, whom he tried to convince. Later, some of those people blocked his way and misbehaved with him. There was no misbehavior from their side nor was there any damage to any vehicle. He said that this matter was well planned and a complaint has been lodged with the police regarding this. The people have also been identified.



DGCA order suspension of 2 directors of Akasa Air for training lapses

Agencies : Aviation safety regulator DGCA on Friday ordered the suspension of director of operations and director of training at Akasa Air for six months for alleged lapses in pilots' training. The two senior executives of the airline, in which the Rakesh Jhunjhunwala family holds stakes, have "failed" to ensure "compliances" with the civil aviation requirements, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in its two separate orders of December 27. The suspension of the Akasa Air director of operations and director of training came after the DGCA found the replies to the show-cause notices issued to them on October 15 and October 30, respectively, as "unsatisfactory". The Directorate General of Civil Aviation, in its orders, also advised the airline to nominate "suitable" candidates for the two positions.

Goa's Manohar International Airport bags "Best Domestic Airport" award

Agencies : Manohar International Airport (GOX), developed and operated by GMR Goa International Airport (GGIAL), has clinched the prestigious "Best Domestic Airport" at Travel Leisure India's Best Awards 2024. The award was given in a ceremony held in New Delhi, the airport said in a statement Thursday. Participants across the globe were asked to rate their travel experiences and share their opinions on the top airports in India. Over 1,86,000 participants completed the 2024 survey. All the airports nationwide were specifically rated on the following criteria's - Access to the airport, Check-in/security process, Restaurants/bars at the airport, Shopping area and Design of the airport. Amongst all Manohar International Airport, Goa was selected as the best domestic airport in India. "We are delighted to receive this prestigious award, which reaffirms our steady commitment towards making every journey a delight, from the moment you arrive at the airport to the moment you depart. Mirroring the soul of Goa, Manohar International Airport ensures a relaxed, friendly and comfortable experience for the millions of passengers it caters to every year. This award is a motivation for us to continue improving and setting new benchmarks in Passenger experience" said RV Sheshan.

He was my friend, philosopher and guide: Sonia Gandhi remembers Manmohan Singh

Agencies : Describing former prime minister Manmohan Singh's death as a "personal loss", Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chief Sonia Gandhi on Friday said he was her friend, philosopher and guide and that in his death, the party has lost a leader who was the epitome of wisdom, nobility and humility. In her message on Singh's demise, Sonia Gandhi said he leaves a void in the national life that can never be filled. "We in the Congress party and the people of India will forever be proud and grateful that we had a leader like Dr Manmohan Singh whose contributions to India's progress and development are immeasurable," she said. "In Dr Manmohan Singh's passing, we have lost a leader who was the epitome of wisdom, nobility and humility, who served our country with all his heart and mind. A luminous and beloved guiding light for the Congress party, his compassion and vision transformed and empowered the lives of millions of Indians," the former Congress president said. Singh was loved by the people of India for his pure heart.

Himachal News: In-charge of Handloom Handcraft Corporation caught taking bribe of 18 thousand rupees, now will be produced in court

Diary Times Desk : The vigilance team caught the in-charge of Handloom/Handicraft Corporation Chamba red handed while taking a bribe of Rs. 18,000 at Ravi View Cafe in the city. The vigilance team, led by ASP Chamba Abhimanyu Verma, laid a trap in a planned manner and caught the accused. Now the vigilance team is busy investigating every aspect of the case. On Saturday, the vigilance team will present the accused in the court. A three-month training was conducted by the Government of India at Handloom/Handicraft Corporation Chamba located in the historic Rangmahal. In this, there was a provision of giving a salary of about Rs. 30,000 per month to the master trainer. Complainant master trainer Ankit Verma submitted a complaint to the vigilance department Chamba that the in-charge of Handloom/Handicraft Corporation Chamba is demanding Rs. 18,000 from him as salary for three months. The vigilance team met the master trainer in a planned manner and called him to Ravi View Cafe and asked him to hand over the money laced with chemicals. After this, the complainant called him to the selected place and as soon as he extended the notes laced with chemicals in his hands to catch them, the vigilance team caught the incharge red handed. The vigilance team asked the government employee for information about the money transactions. But, he got completely scared. After this, when the team made him wash his hands with the chemical, the color started coming out of his hands. The team has arrested him. Now the accused will be presented in the court. ASP Abhimanyu Verma said that on the complaint of complainant master trainer Ankit Verma, the police laid a trap and caught the in-charge of Handloom.

Manmohan Singh's life and work profoundly shaped India's destiny: CWC

Agencies : The Congress Working Committee (CWC) met here on Friday and paid glowing tributes to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, saying he was a towering figure in India's political and economic landscape whose contributions transformed the country and earned him respect worldwide. In a condolence resolution passed at the meeting, CWC mourned the loss of a "true statesman" whose life and work have profoundly shaped the destiny of India. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, and Congress general secretaries Jairam Ramesh, KC Venugopal and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra among others met here at the AICC headquarters for a meeting of CWC to pay homage to the former prime minister. Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms and a consensus builder in the rough world of politics, died at AIIMS, Delhi, late on Thursday. He was 92. "Dr Singh was a towering figure in India's political and economic landscape, whose contributions transformed the country and earned him respect worldwide.



Himachal Snowfall: Heavy snowfall in the area from Solanganala to Palchan, more than 1500 vehicles stranded; Rescue operation started



Diary Times Desk : Tourists enjoyed the whole day amidst snowfall in Solanganala, but when the tourists started returning in the evening, the difficulties increased. Late in the evening, more than 1500 vehicles got stuck due to heavy snowfall in the area from Solanganala to Palchan. Due to the formation of a light layer of snow, vehicles started skidding on the road. Due to which a traffic jam situation arose. Manali Police has started a rescue operation and started removing vehicles one by one. DSP Manali KD Sharma is engaged in the operation with his team. Snowfall increased the difficulties of the tourists. The weather remained bad throughout the day on Friday. Snowfall started in Solanganala in the afternoon itself. Tourists became excited and started dancing after seeing the snow flakes, but when they started returning in the evening, the speed of snowfall increased. The road from Solanganala to Palchan was covered with a layer of snow. The vehicles of tourists returning from Solanganala to Manali started skidding on the snow.

Himachal: Allegations of attack on Kashmiri traders in Bilaspur, Mehbooba Mufti demands intervention from CM Sukhu

Diary Times Desk : The former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir has alleged attacks and harassment on Kashmiri shawl sellers in Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh. The PDP leader has written in a post on social media that these traders are being prevented from doing business in Bilaspur district despite having complete documents and are being threatened. PDP chief and former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Mehbooba Mufti has expressed concern over this issue and has appealed to Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu to intervene. Mehbooba Mufti wrote on social media, "Kashmiri shawl sellers in Himachal Pradesh's Bilaspur district are facing harassment, attacks and threats from right-wing groups. She further writes that "Despite proper documents, they are being prevented from doing business and evicted. This is the third such incident.

Himachal News: People with annual income of Rs 3 lakh will now be able to take cheap loans, decision taken in this meeting

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh Minority Finance and Development Corporation has increased the family income limit to Rs 3 lakh for providing loans at concessional rates to minorities and Divyangjans for setting up and expanding self-employment. Earlier this income limit was Rs 98 thousand in rural areas and Rs 1.20 lakh in urban areas. This decision was taken in the 52nd Board of Directors meeting of the corporation held on Thursday under the chairmanship of Health, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Dr. Dhani Ram Shandil. Dr. Shandil said that the state government is taking effective steps for the empowerment and upliftment of minorities and Divyangs in Himachal Pradesh. In this connection, the state government is providing various facilities for the welfare of minorities and Divyangs.

Himachal Pradesh High Court: Himachal Pradesh High Court asked the government, where did the relief amount of Rs 76 lakh go

Diary Times Desk : The High Court has sought a reply from the state government on the allocation of compensation amount of Rs 76 lakh issued by the Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam management to the Luhri project affected people. The High Court asked the government where the relief amount went. The court has expressed dissatisfaction over the affidavit filed by the government in the case and directed the amicus curiae to submit his report on it. Due to indiscriminate blasting in the Luhri project, the people of Narola village are facing a threat to life and property. Due to unscientific blasting, cracks have appeared in the houses. The ever-increasing pollution is also having a deep impact on people's health. Almond and apple orchards have been badly affected. There are hills and large rocks above the village, from which stones are falling and cracks have appeared in them. The people of Narola wrote a letter to the High Court on 16 November 2021 and informed about the damage caused by the project and the status quo. Taking cognizance of the letter.

Anurag Thakur: Anurag Thakur hits back at Chief Minister Sukhu, says- someone should prove his relation with the businessman

Diary Times Desk : Someone should prove that he has any relation with a businessman of Naidun. If there is a relation by casting votes, then he has a relation with the whole of Himachal. He should answer about business relations with them. Former Union Minister and MP Anurag Thakur has retaliated to CM Sukhu's statement in the assembly on the crusher businessman under the purview of ED's action. He said these things in response to the questions of journalists in his office on Friday. He quipped that if CM Sukhu knows who is voting for whom in the voting machine, then it raises big questions. What kind of support is being talked about here is important. Recently, CM Sukhu had given this statement in the assembly that he has no relation with the crusher businessman arrested by ED. The businessman is his voter in the assembly and Anurag Thakur's voter in the Lok Sabha. This answer was given when BJP leaders raised questions on the CM's relationship with the businessman.

Himachal News: 31 posts of teaching staff will be filled in Himachal Pradesh Central University, apply by January 23

Diary Times Desk : 31 posts of teaching staff will be filled in Himachal Pradesh Central University. Out of these, 28 posts will be filled on regular basis, while three posts will be filled on contract basis. Eligible candidates will be able to apply for these posts till January 23. The Central University management has issued a notification to fill these posts. Candidates of General and EWS category and OBC (NCL) applying for these posts will be charged Rs 1750 as fee, in which Rs 250 will have to be paid as processing fee and Rs 1500 as examination fee. At the same time, Rs 1500 will be charged as examination fee from SC, ST, PWD and female candidates. According to the information, Himachal Pradesh Central University has issued a notification to fill various posts of teaching staff. During this, 11 posts of professors, 13 posts of associate professors and four posts of assistant professors are included on regular basis. Apart from this, three posts of assistant professors will also be filled on contract basis. To apply for these posts, candidates will be able to apply through online medium till January 23, 2025.

Yuva Sangam strengthens unity among youth: Shukla

Diary Times Desk : Students from the National Institute of Technology, Hamirpur, and several universities of Telangana participating in the 'Yuva Sangam' interacted with Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla at Raj Bhawan today. The 'Yuva Sangam' was organised under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' programme. The Governor said such programmes were useful in promoting cultural engagement and understanding, which further strengthened the feeling of unity among the youth. He added that foreign travellers since ages explored India and studied the Vedas. He said, "As their understanding about the Vedas developed, they became more and more impressed by the knowledge traditions of India." He added, "If you want to learn something, learn from the Vedas and if you want to understand, then understand India." The Governor said the students must feel proud of their culture. Students from the National Institute of Technology, Hamirpur, and several universities of Telangana participating in the 'Yuva Sangam' interacted with Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla.

Punjab: 8 killed after bus falls into drain in Bathinda

Agencies : At least eight people were killed in a bus accident in Punjab's Bathinda on Friday, Bathinda Urban MLA Jagroop Singh Gill said adding that five died on the spot while three succumbed to serious injuries during treatment. Gill was briefed by the Bathinda civil surgeon Dr Ramandeep Singla when the MLA visited Shaheed Bhai Mani Singh Civil Hospital in Bathinda city where 18 injured passengers are currently being treated. "Five died on the spot while three succumbed to serious injuries during treatment. Nearly 18 are being treated at the Shaheed Bhai Mani Singh Civil Hospital. The health officials have instructed to ensure treatment," Gill told HT. The accident occurred near Jiwan Singh Wala village in Bathinda when a bus fell into a drain after crashing a bridge. A rescue operation is underway with the help of NDRF, police and locals.

Are Indians ordering less? Pizza sales fall by 1.6 crore on Zomato, biryani sees a drop too

Agencies : Zomato has released its year end report for 2024, providing some interesting insights into how Indians like to eat. Just like the last eight years, biryani reigned supreme in terms of sales, clocking over 9 crore orders on Zomato in 2024. Pizza came in second with 5.8 crore orders placed through the app. However, Zomato data shows that both biryani and pizza saw a marginal decline in sales in 2024 as compared to 2023. According to Zomato, Indians ordered 10,09,80,615 biryanis in 2023. In 2024, the number of orders dropped to 9,13,99,110. That's a drop of almost 95 lakh orders in one year. The same story was repeated with pizza, with sales of the Italian classic declining by as much as 1.6 crore. As per Zomato, Indians ordered a whopping 7,45,30,036 pizzas in 2023. By 2024, the number fell to only 5,84,46,908. That means pizza sales dropped by over 20% in just one year. Zomato has not released data of other dishes ordered through its platform. Swiggy, however, revealed that its second most popular dish was not pizza but dosa, which secured 2.3 crore orders in 2024. On both Swiggy and Zomato, biryani continued its reign as the undisputed favourite dish to order by Indian households. Indians ordered 3 biryanis every second on Zomato, and more than 2 biryanis per second on Swiggy. The Zomato 2024 year end report also provided some other interesting insights.

Congress Seeks Space For Memorial To Manmohan Singh, Writes To PM



Agencies : Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about exploring the possibility of building a memorial to Manmohan Singh at the same site where the last rites would be held, the party said today. Manmohan Singh, who died of age-related medical issues at 92, was prime minister for two terms in the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government from 2004 to 2014. He had been in poor health for the last few months. "Apropos our telephonic conversation today morning, wherein I made a request to hold Dr Manmohan Singh's last rites, which will take place tomorrow i.e. 28th December 2024, at his final resting place that would be a sacrosanct venue for memorial of the great son of India," Mr Kharge said in the letter, which was posted by the Congress on X. "This is in keeping with such tradition of having memorials of statesmen and former prime ministers at the very place of their funerals," the Congress chief said.

Delhi Records Highest December Rainfall In 15 Years, Temperature Drops

Agencies : Rain lashed Delhi-NCR throughout Friday with the city recording its highest December rainfall in the last 15 years and the mercury dropping sharply to 14.6 degree celsius, the weather department said. The rain began late Thursday around 2.30 am and continued throughout the day, it said. According to Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) data between in the last 24 hours till 8.30 am on Friday, the city logged 9.1 mm of rainfall. The observatory at Safdarjung -- the national capital's primary weather station -- recorded an additional 30.2 mm of rainfall between from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm on Friday.

China defends plan to build world's largest dam over Brahmaputra River in Tibet

Agencies : Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson, Mao Ning, on Friday, downplayed apprehensions over the country's plan to build the world's largest dam on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet, saying that the mega project will not affect riparian states and its safety concerns have been addressed through decades of studies. The 137-billion-dollar project is being constructed in the ecologically fragile Himalayan region located along a tectonic plate boundary. She said the world's largest dam will not impact.

Pollution Curbs Under GRAP-3 Revoked In Delhi As Air Quality Improves

Agencies : Pollution curbs under GRAP-3 have been revoked in Delhi and the National Capital Region after air quality improved in the area following continuous rain since Friday morning. "Owing to the favourable meteorological conditions and continuous rains since early morning, the AQI of Delhi has been continuously improving and has been recorded as 348 at 5:00 PM and 341 at 6:00 PM & 334 at 7:00 PM," the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), which is the pollution watchdog for the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas, said in a statement. The CAQM said that as per the air quality and weather forecast by the India Meteorological Department and IIT Madras, the AQI of Delhi is expected to remain in the 'poor' category (between 200 and 300) for the next few days. Under Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) 3, there was a ban on the operation of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheelers in Delhi.

'Somebody's life at stake...': SC raps Punjab govt over farmer leader Dallewal's health

Agencies : The Supreme Court on Friday raised serious concerns over the deteriorating health of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite hunger strike for over a month now. His fast unto death began on November 26. The apex court directed the Punjab government to ensure that Dallewal receives the necessary medical assistance. "If there is a law and order situation, you have to deal with it with iron hands. Somebody's life is at stake. You need to take it seriously. Medical aid has to be given.

Madras High Court Takes Suo Motu Cognizance Of Alleged Sexual Assault Of Student At Anna University

Agencies : The Madras High Court on Friday (December 27) took suo motu cognizance of the alleged sexual assault of a 2nd-year Engineering Student inside the Anna University campus in Chennai. A division bench bench of Justice SM Subramaniam and Justice V Lakshminarayanan took suo motu cognizance of the incident based on a letter by Advocate R Varalakshmi. The bench however refrained from passing any orders noting that the formal orders from the Chief Justice were yet to be received. The court noted that since the procedure had to be followed while initiating the suo motu cognizance, the court had to await the Chief Justice's orders. The Advocate General meanwhile assured the court that the State would file a status report regarding the investigation in the case. The court thus directed the matter to be placed before the Chief Justice for appropriate orders. "We've made an attempt to get orders from the Chief Justice. But unfortunately, since he's not available, we're unable to obtain his written orders. There's a procedure to be followed. So we'll have to wait for the official orders," the court orally said in open court.



South Korea's assembly votes 192-0 to impeach acting leader Han Duck-soo

Agencies : South Korea's opposition-controlled National Assembly has voted to impeach the country's acting leader, Han Duck-soo. The assembly approved the impeachment motion in a 192-0 vote on Friday. Governing party lawmakers boycotted the vote. Han, the No. 2 official in South Korea, has been the caretaker leader after President Yoon Suk Yeol was impeached by the assembly over his short-lived imposition of martial law earlier this month. Han's impeachment further deepens South Korea's political crisis and damages its international image.

Squid Game creator Hwang Dong-hyuk says he 'smiles inside' after killing off characters, talks about season 3

Agencies : The deaths of characters on Squid Game, Netflix's global sensation, have made viewers gasp, cringe, or cry. Yet, they have a rather different effect on one person. The show's creator, writer, and director, Hwang Dong-hyuk, feels happiness seeing them go. In a recent interview with AP, the filmmaker opened up on the new season of the global hit, what season 3 holds in store, and his future plans. Squid Game has a huge cast and Hwang says it was "really difficult" to manage everyone on set. As characters would die, Hwang recalls saying to the actors on their last day, "Oh no! How sad! I won't see you tomorrow," but I was always smiling inside." Squid Game season two premiered on Netflix this Thursday. It once again stars Lee Jung-jae and centers around a secret competition in South Korea that targets people in debt and the winner gets a big cash prize. What they don't know is that losing the game is deadly. Talking about what he learnt from his journey on Squid Game, the filmmaker said, "I learned that I shouldn't give up. If you love something and if you want to create something, it might not work now, but the time might come later. Or that idea could be the source of inspiration for something else." Season 2 features more characters and consequently more backstories. Opening up and the need and challenges of that.

"External Interference" Caused Plane Crash In Kazakhstan: Azerbaijan Airlines



Agencies : Azerbaijan Airlines said "external physical and technical interference" led to the plane crash in Kazakhstan in which 38 people died out of 67 on board. On Christmas, the Embraer 190 aircraft operated by Azerbaijan Airlines, took off from Baku for Grozny in Russia's Chechnya. The aircraft was 'denied landing due to fog' in Grozny and diverted far off the Caspian Sea, where it crashed in the Aktau city of Kazakhstan, killing 38 and 29 surviving the crash. A day later, reporters emerged that a Russian surface-to-air missile may have caused the deadly crash, forcing the aircraft to limp off the Caspian Sea and then crashing in an open field. Reports say the missile was "accidentally fired" on the aircraft, a hypothesis the Kremlin has rejected and "warned against". An investigation is still underway but a pro-government Azerbaijani website, Caliber, cited unnamed officials in a report and said that a missile from a Pantsir-S air defence system downed the plane.

China Sanctions US Firms Over Taiwan Military Support

Agencies : China on Friday slapped sanctions on seven US companies after Washington's approval last week of a \$571.3 million military aid package to Taiwan, which Beijing said infringed on its "sovereignty and territory". Last Friday, US President Joe Biden authorised the drawdown of up to \$571.3 million for defence assistance to the self-ruled island, which China regards as its own territory. Washington's actions "interfere in China's internal affairs, and undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity", the Chinese foreign ministry said as it announced the sanctions. The statement also hit out at Washington's 2025 defence budget, which includes a security cooperation initiative with Taiwan, as well as calls for strengthened defence industrial cooperation with Taipei.

Saudi Arabia condemns Israeli violations against Al-Aqsa, Syria

Agencies : The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expressed its condemnation and denunciation of the continued Israeli violations, including the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyard by the Israeli National Security Minister, and the incursions of the occupation forces in southern Syria. In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and carried by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the Kingdom affirmed that these systematic practices in Al Aqsa Mosque constitute a flagrant transgression and provocation of the feelings of Muslims around the world, and that the continuation of military operations in Syria is a further undermining of the chances of Syria restoring its security and stability.

Russian tycoon pays \$145K for the first downed F-16 fighter

Agencies : CEO of Russian company Fores, confirmed to TASS that he is ready to pay the substantial 15 million ruble reward [approximately \$145,000] for the destruction of the first American-made F-16 fighter jet in the ongoing special military operation in Ukraine. The payment for downing the F-16 is our way of supporting the brave soldiers who risk their lives every day for the security of our homeland. We are immensely proud of our military's heroism and will continue to provide them with all possible assistance," Shmotyev declared. While Shmotyev did not specifically mention the F-16 that was reportedly shot down on December 26 near Zaporizhzhia, his statement comes just one day after these claims first surfaced. It's unclear whether the reward applies to this particular incident or future engagements involving the fighter jet.

Climate Change Caused 41 Additional Days Of Extreme Heat This Year: Report

Agencies : The world experienced an average of 41 more days of extreme heat in 2024 due to climate change, a new report said on Friday. According to the European climate agency Copernicus, 2024 is set to end as the warmest year on record and the first year with a global average temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. A yearly review report by two groups of climate scientists -- World Weather Attribution (WWA) and Climate Central -- said the world saw an average of 41 more days of dangerous heat in 2024. Small island developing states were hit the hardest, with their people experiencing over 130 additional hot days. The scientists identified 219 extreme weather events in 2024 and studied 29 of them. They found that climate change contributed to at least 3,700 deaths and displaced millions in 26 extreme weather events. "It is likely the total number of people killed in extreme weather events intensified by climate change this year is in the tens or hundreds of thousands," the report said. The floods in Sudan, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad were the deadliest event studied by the group, with at least 2,000 people killed.



FBI Evidence Of Chinese Lab Leak Causing COVID-19 Withheld From Biden: Report

Agencies : The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) found evidence that a Chinese lab leak caused COVID-19 but the agency was not allowed to present the findings by other intelligence agencies to President Joe Biden, a report in Wall Street Journal has claimed. Jason Bannan, a doctor of microbiology and former senior scientist at the FBI, claims that the agency had 'moderate confidence' in its assessment -- more than any other domestic intel or security service agency.

Punjab government forms medical board as farmer leader Dallewal's health deteriorates



Agencies : The Punjab government has formed a high-level medical board comprising senior doctors to provide medical care to farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on a fast unto death at Dabbi Gujran village. Despite concerns about his deteriorating health, Dallewal has refused to accept treatment or shifting to a makeshift hospital. A team of medical experts and government officials, including Patiala DIG Mandeep Singh Sidhu, Patiala SSP Dr Nanak Singh, and DC Dr Preeti Yadav, urged Dallewal to seek medical treatment. The team offered quality treatment and informed him that medical teams are available 24/7 at the protest site, along with advanced life support (ALS) ambulances and necessary medical equipment. These ambulances are equipped with ECG monitor, defibrillator, ventilator, suction machine, oxygen with mask, intravenous fluids, respiratory intubation equipment and catheterisation material. The team also suggested shifting him to Rajindra Medical.

PU mourns death of its alumna, teacher

Agencies : Former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, a towering figure in Indian politics and economics, passed away at the age of 92 today. The news of his death has left the nation in mourning, with tributes pouring in from all corners of the country, including his alma mater, Panjab University (PU), where his journey in academia began. Dr Singh did his matriculation in 1948, intermediate in 1950, BA in Economics (Hons) in 1952 and MA Economics in 1954, all from Panjab University. His academic journey at the university continued as he became a senior lecturer of Economics from 1957 to 1959, a reader in Economics Department from 1959 to 1963 and later, a Professor in the same department from 1963 to 1965.

Student protest against Senate poll delay dominates PU scene

Agencies : The student protest over the delay in elections to Senate, the governing body of Panjab University, was one of the major developments on the campus in 2024. The other significant events were much-awaited recruitment of regular faculty after 2014, first-ever victory of an Independent candidate for the post of Panjab University Campus Student Council (PUCSC) president, maiden win of the BJP-backed student wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad's candidate in the PUCSC poll without an alliance. Besides, there were protests by student organisations under the banner of the Panjab University Bachao Morcha against the delay in Senate poll, which is still on, without the support of a majority of students, the student council and campus parties. After a long time, the campus also saw a gathering of mainstream political leaders, mainly from the Congress, who extended support to the student protest against the delay in holding Senate poll. The protesting students clashed with the police twice this year – first, when they allegedly tried to disrupt the address of Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann in Law Auditorium.

Western disturbance to bring rain, cold wave on New Year's Eve: IMD

Agencies : A western disturbance is expected to bring rain and snow to northwest India, including the Western Himalayan Region, on December 27 and 28, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall, snowfall, thunderstorms, and lightning are likely over the region. Dense fog and cold wave conditions are also forecasted in some areas of Punjab till December 31. A western disturbance, as a cyclonic circulation, lies over north Pakistan and its neighbourhood in lower and middle tropospheric levels. An induced cyclonic circulation prevails over southwest Rajasthan, with a trough running from north Pakistan to the east-central Arabian Sea. Under the influence of these systems, fairly widespread to widespread rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning, is likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, and Delhi on December 27. Isolated to scattered rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds with speeds of 30 to 40 kmph, is likely over the same region on December 28.

Farmers' agitation: SC seeks compliance report from Punjab govt

Agencies : The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Punjab government to file a compliance report by Saturday on its December 20 order wanting that farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal – who has been on a fast-unto-death since November 26 – be shifted to a hospital. "We are very anxious to see how you comply with our direction to have him (Dallewal) hospitalised. We are not saying much...but this matter will be heard on Saturday," a Bench led by Justice Surya Kant told Punjab Advocate General Gurminder Singh. The top court directed the Punjab Chief Secretary and Director General of Police to remain present during the hearing on Saturday. Singh told the Bench that an eight-member delegation had gone there for the purpose but the farmers were protesting. "If it is a law and order issue you have to deal with it with an iron hand... Somebody's life is at stake. You need to take it seriously. Medical aid has to be given and the impression is that you are not following it," the Bench – which also included Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia – told the Advocate General. The AG said he would bring the correct report before the top court. "When we know that he is safe and sound, we will take him online during hearing and then we will proceed. First of all, we are concerned about his life and safety," said the Bench which had earlier pulled up the Punjab government for not conducting medical tests on Dallewal.

2 shot dead, one critically injured as gunmen open fire outside gym in Yamunanagar

Agencies : Two persons were shot dead while another was seriously injured after some unidentified men fired at them outside a gym at Kheri Lakha Singh village in Radaur town of Yamunanagar on Thursday. The deceased were identified as Pankaj Malik, a resident of UP, and Virender, a resident of Golini village in Yamunanagar. The injured was identified as Arjun, a resident of Unheri village of Yamunanagar. Around 8 am, the victims came out of the gym and were about to leave in their car when four to five persons reached there on motorcycles and started firing indiscriminately at them. Pankaj and Virender died on the spot. The accused kept firing at them to ensure that they didn't survive. Meanwhile, Arjun rushed to a nearby private hospital in a bid to save himself. However, the accused followed him and opened fire at him in the hospital, leaving him seriously injured. He was later referred to the PGI, Chandigarh. The assassins fled the spot.

Mass movement must to protect youth from drugs: CM

Agencies : Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini today expressed concern over the drug menace in the state and called upon religious leaders and social institutions to unite in launching a mass movement against drug addiction. Addressing a gathering at the state-level Veer Bal Diwas at Kurukshetra University today, Saini called upon people to draw inspiration from the sacrifices made by the Sahibzadas and urged parents to teach their children the values of courage, sacrifice, and dedication. "The sacrifice of Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh serves as an inspiration for making the ultimate sacrifice in the service of the nation. The martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's family is the greatest sacrifice in history. Their sacrifices were made to protect the country, religion, and society, and to safeguard the weak and helpless," he said. The CM also paid homage to Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, who avenged the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas, and said he was the first Sikh commander who broke the myth of the Mughals being invincible. The CM mentioned various sites in Haryana associated with Sikh Gurus and said various public institutions and roads across Haryana were named after the Gurus. He said Lohgarh Bhagwanpur was being developed as a tourism hub.

Videos of vehicles skidding on snowy roads worry hoteliers

Diary Times Desk : Hoteliers of Kullu and Manali have expressed concern over a surge in fake videos circulating on social media, which, they claim, are damaging the tourism industry. The videos, showing vehicles skidding dangerously on snowy roads, have been falsely attributed to Manali and its surrounding areas, sparking unwarranted panic among potential tourists. Hem Raj Sharma, a Manali-based hotelier, says that the viral videos were not shot in Manali or nearby locations. "After snowfall in Manali and its vicinity, miscreants are spreading fake videos to harm the tourism sector," he adds. Sharma says, "The footage shows vehicles skidding, which have no connection to our region. This kind of misinformation is severely affecting the image of our town." He adds, "These negative reports and fake videos are dampening tourism activities in the region."

Income limit for minorities, divyangs to avail of loan hiked

Diary Times Desk : To aid minorities and 'Divyangjans' to establish their start-ups and promote self-employment, the Himachal Pradesh Minority Finance and Development Corporation (HPMFDC) has increased the limit for the minimum family income to Rs 3 lakh annually to avail of loans at concessional rates. Earlier, this income limit was Rs 98,000 in rural areas and Rs 1.20 lakh in urban areas. The decision in this regard was taken at the 52nd meeting of the Board of Directors of the corporation held under the chairmanship of Health Minister Dhani Ram Shandil. The minister said that the state government was taking effective steps for the empowerment and uplift of the minorities and divyangjans. He added, "For the welfare of the minorities and divyangs, the government provides several facilities. During 2023-24, loans to the tune of Rs 12.97 crore were granted to the minorities and loans of Rs 5.41 crore were granted to divyangjans through the HPMFDC at concessional interest rates." Shandil said that in the current fiscal, targets had been set to add more beneficiaries.

Snowfall likely today, orange alert issued



Diary Times Desk : Another spell of snowfall is just round the corner in the state. The weather department has issued an orange alert for light to moderate snowfall/rainfall, along with a few heavy spells, over many parts of the high and adjoining mid hills from tomorrow till December 29. Besides, cold to severely cold day conditions will prevail at many places till December 29. A few spells of snowfall is "very likely" over most tourist destinations across the state, including Shimla, on tomorrow and day after. If the forecast comes true, Shimla and adjoining places will receive the third spell of snowfall in December. And it will be only the second time in the past 10 years that the city will get snowfall thrice in December – Shimla had seen three spells of snowfall in December 2014. Ever since, the snowfall in December has been on the decline, so much so that the past three Decembers went completely dry. The forecast will make happy the stakeholders of the tourism sector, who are already delighted with the pre-Christmas snowfall. The December 23 snowfall led to a huge rise in tourist footfall in the state for Christmas.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister pays tribute to former PM Manmohan Singh, announces state-wide closure

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu expressed sorrow over the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, describing him as a visionary leader whose death is an immense loss to the nation. In his condolence message, Sukhu acknowledged Singh's role in shaping India's economic and social progress. "Manmohan Singh was a great leader and his contributions to the country are immeasurable," the CM said, emphasising Singh's policies had helped India gain global recognition. As a mark of respect, the state government has announced all offices and educational institutions in Himachal Pradesh would remain closed on December 27 and 28. Additionally, the ongoing winter carnival in Shimla has been postponed until January 1. Sukhu highlighted the former Prime Minister's achievements during his tenure, particularly in economic liberalisation, which boosted foreign investment and spurred growth. He also praised the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNRGA), which provided employment to the underprivileged and the enactment of the RTI.

Forensic reports awaited, probe into perfume factory fire delayed

Diary Times Desk : State and central forensic science labs are yet to finalise their reports about the cause of the fire in an industry at Jharmajri in Baddi in which nine factory workers were charred to death more than 10 months ago. This has not only delayed a time-bound magisterial probe ordered by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu but also delayed the payment of compensation to the family of the deceased. The mishap had taken place at perfume manufacturing unit NR Aromas at Jharmajri on February 2. Additional Deputy Commissioner, Solan, Ajay Yadav, said that the forensic reports of the state and central labs were still awaited. He, however, added that the probe would soon be finalised on the basis of other findings. In the absence of the forensic science report, the post-mortem report was also delayed as the cause of death could not be ascertained. This had also delayed grant of monetary compensation to the kin of the victims as cause of death could not be established in the post-mortem report. SDM, Baddi, Vivek Mahajan said that Rs 4 lakh had been granted to the kin of five victims in September while in three cases.

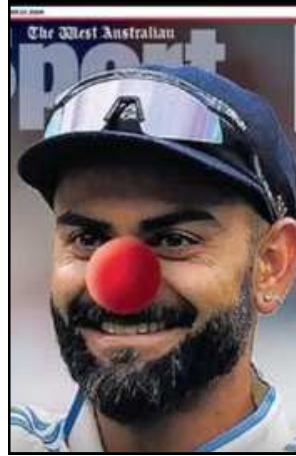
Measures underway to check falling enrolment, improve quality of education in govt schools

Diary Times Desk : A few girl students were walking back to their homes at Dharech, one of the remote villages in Shimla district. Instead of government school uniform, they were attired in elegant grey pants, pullover and a tie. "We love our new uniform, it's so much better than the old one," the girls said as they pulled up each other into a pick-up van that offered to drop them close to their homes. The government's decision to allow the schools to decide their own uniform, in consultation with parents, has given the government school students an opportunity to dress up smartly, like the students of private institutes. Allowing schools to choose their uniforms may appear to be a cosmetic change to address bigger challenges like a sharp decline in enrolment at government schools, but it could go a long way in checking the current exodus of students from government schools to private institutions. Smart uniform and English as a medium of instruction are among the major reasons behind parents and students preferring private schools over government institutes. For the record, private schools are just around 15 per cent of the total schools in the state and yet they have nearly 40 per cent of the total students. The declining quality of education, which reflects in the ASER Report and Performance Grading Index, is another big challenge facing government schools.



Virat Kohli branded 'Clown Kohli' by Australian media, Ravi Shastri reacts 'I wish our country would...'

Agencies : Virat Kohli's tussle with the Australia media continues as the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy intensifies. The series is locked in at 1-1 and the fourth Test is underway at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The contest was heavily dominated by Australia on the opening day but the highlight of the day was an altercation between Kohli and 19-year-old debutant Sam Konstas. Konstas started his Test career with a memorable effort as he went on a rampage against Jasprit Bumrah, India's best bowler in the series. Mohammed Siraj, Bumrah's bowling partner, too felt ineffective against the youngster, as the former was seen exchanging a few words with the batter on his follow-through. However, one incident, which caught most eyeballs was Kohli's fiery exchange with Konstas, which took place after the 10th over of Australia's first innings. Kohli while exchanging sides in between overs shoulder dashed with Konstas, which former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting felt was instigated by the Indian. Former India player and coach Ravi Shastri and batting legend Sunil Gavaskar were also critical of Kohli's antics.



Short TAKES

Ervine, Bennett tons help Zimbabwe retain control

Agencies : Centuries from Craig Ervine and Brian Bennett put Zimbabwe in firm control of the first Test against Afghanistan in Bulawayo. After Sean Williams was dismissed for 154, Ervine and Bennett notched up three-figure scores to power Zimbabwe to their highest Test total - 586. In reply, Afghanistan were 95/2 at Stumps on Day 2, with Rahmat Shah unbeaten on 49. Zimbabwe, who started the day at 363/4, lost overnight centurion Sean Williams early in the day. Williams got to his second 150-plus score and registered his career-best knock before he fell to the short-ball trap from Naveed Zadrn. This ended a partnership worth 163 runs but Zimbabwe continued to pile on the agony for Afghanistan with Ervine and Brian Bennett adding to the total. The 39-year-old Ervine got to his fourth Test hundred and was involved in a good stand with Bennett as they powered Zimbabwe past 450. Zia-ur-Rehman delivered a double strike by sending Ervine and Brandon Mavuta back in the same over, with Zimbabwe ending the first session on Day 2 at 471/7. Upon resumption, Bennett continued to deflate Afghanistan as he got to his maiden fifty-plus score in Test cricket.

Ravi Shastri, Sunil Gavaskar Rip Into Rohit Sharma's Captaincy Over 4th Test Tactics

Agencies : India captain Rohit Sharma continues to court criticism over his baffling strategy and selection calls in the Melbourne Test. Since announcing the return of Washington Sundar to India's playing XI for the Boxing Day Test -- which came at the cost of Shubman Gill -- Rohit has had his decision-making questioned time and again. Be it the use of his bowlers, or match-ups used against different Australian batters, Rohit struggled to get the best out of India's bowling attack for the first two days. Some of his decisions received public criticism from legends like Suni Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri. During his commentary stint on Day 2 of the Melbourne Test, Shastri questioned both Rohit and head coach Gambhir over the decision to add 2 spinners to the playing XI as they didn't show the required trust in them. "Why did you take 2 spinners if you had to bowl them after 40 overs? In Melbourne, spinners should always bowl in 1 or 1 and a half overs. I didn't understand why Jadeja and Sundar bowled after 40 overs.

First Time In 147 Years: South Africa Debutant Corbin Bosch Scripts History, Achieves Unique Feat

Agencies : South African cricket team all-rounder Corbin Bosch scripted history by achieving a unique feat on Test debut against Pakistan at the Centurion. Bosch registered a four-wicket haul and then went on to slam 81 while batting at No. 9. As a result, he broke a 122-year-old record for the highest score by a South African batter on debut while batting at No. 8 or below. This was also the first time in the history of Test cricket that a batter registered a 80-plus score on debut at No. 9. For South Africa, he became the first cricketer ever to score a half-century and take a four wicket haul on debut in Test cricket. Debutant fast bowler Corbin Bosch, batting at number nine, hit an attacking 81 not out and took South Africa to a 90-run first-innings lead on the second day of the first Test against Pakistan at SuperSport Park on Friday. South Africa were bowled out for 301 in reply to Pakistan's 211. South Africa were just two runs ahead when opener Aiden Markram was eighth man out for 89. But Bosch, who has a first-class batting average above 40, shared stands of 41 with Kagiso Rabada (13) and 47 with Dane Paterson (12). Bosch hit 15 fours in a 93-ball innings to follow up his first-innings bowling.

Sunil Gavaskar Wants India To Drop Out-Of-Form Star, Says "Be Brutally..."

Agencies : Legendary batter Sunil Gavaskar shared a brutally honest review of the underperforming pacer Mohammed Siraj and called for the left-arm pacer to be dropped from the Indian side after a string of poor outings in the ongoing Border Gavaskar Trophy series. Siraj, who was a vital cog in the 2021 Border-Gavaskar Trophy series win, has not been up to the mark in the ongoing series, having taken 13 wickets in seven innings and not being fierce enough with the new ball, causing extra burden on Jasprit Bumrah's shoulders. Gavaskar believes the right-arm quick needs to be told he is being dropped rather than being rested. "I think Siraj, perhaps, needs a little bit of a break. In the sense, I am not saying a break, he needs to be told that he is left out of the team for non-performance. There has to be a situation where you can't beat around the bush. "You need to be brutally upfront and say 'look, your performance has not been up to scratch, and therefore you are being dropped.' When you start talking about 'rest', players get wrong ideas. They feel they don't need to up their game," Gavaskar told Star Sports. Siraj has also topped the unwanted list of having conceded.

Manjrekar urges India to stop treating Rohit Sharma as 'VIP', end KL Rahul 'sacrifice': 'Happened with Tendulkar...'

Agencies : India captain Rohit Sharma is struggling for runs. The right-handed batter, who came out in the middle at No.6 in the previous Tests against Australia in Adelaide and Brisbane, returned to his original opening slot in the Melbourne contest to change his fortunes around. However, the result was the same: he lasted just five balls in the first innings of the Boxing Day Test. Former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar has now said that the move to have Rohit open was unfair to KL Rahul, as the latter showed great skill and composure while opening in the first three Tests. Rohit Sharma managed just three runs in the first innings of the Melbourne Test before being dismissed by Australia captain Pat Cummins. The 37-year-old was in no control as he tried to play a pull shot, and in the end, he handed a simple catch to Scott Boland.

