

Himachal News: HIPA will be known by the name of former PM late Dr. Manmohan Singh, Chief Minister Sukhu announced



Diary Times Desk : Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu announced to name the Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA), Shimla, after former Prime Minister late Dr. Manmohan Singh on completion of 50 years of its establishment. He also paid tribute to former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at HIPA and said that due to his farsighted policies, the people of the country are standing with self-respect and he has also contributed significantly in the development of Himachal Pradesh. Due to his efforts, many big institutions were opened in Himachal Pradesh, the benefits of which are being received by the people of the state today. The Chief Minister also released a coffee table book of HIPA on this occasion. He also inaugurated the training program of Special Educators at HIPA, which will run till January 3, in which 80 teachers are participating. He said that teachers will get training to teach special children with new age technology, which will benefit visually impaired children. This new method will replace Braille.

Congress National General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi reached Shimla, program to stay for a week



Diary Times Desk : Congress National General Secretary and Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad Priyanka Gandhi reached Shimla on Wednesday. Priyanka Gandhi reached Chhabra at around 1.30 pm. Priyanka Gandhi's children had reached Shimla two days ago. Party sources said that Priyanka Gandhi has a program to stay in Shimla for the next one week. Priyanka Gandhi and her children have come to Shimla to see the snow.

Govt extends additional subsidy package of up to ₹3,850 cr for DAP fertiliser



Agencies : The government on Wednesday extended additional subsidy on di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) beyond December 31, 2024, to help maintain retail prices of this key fertiliser at ₹1,350 per bag of 50 kg -- a move that could cost the exchequer up to ₹3,850 crore. Last year, the Centre announced a one-time special package on DAP at ₹3,500 per tonne, valid from April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, with a financial implication of ₹2,625 crore to keep prices under check. The package was over and above the nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) fixed by the government on non-urea nutrients. On Wednesday, the Union Cabinet -- chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- approved the proposal for an extension of a one-time special package on DAP at the rate of ₹3,500 per tonne for the period from January 1, 2025, till further orders. The decision has been taken to "ensure sustainable availability of DAP at affordable prices to the farmers", an official statement said.

Supreme Court to hear plea on fasting farmer leader Jagjit Dallewal's hospitalisation today

Agencies : The Supreme Court on Thursday will hear a plea seeking contempt action against the Punjab government for allegedly not complying with directions to hospitalise farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite fast for more than a month. According to a PTI report, a top court bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan will hear the petition. The Bhagwant Mann government had informed the vacation bench that the 70-year-old farmer leader had agreed for medical aid given the Centre accepted his proposal to hold talks. According to the PTI report, the top court took note of the plea moved by the Punjab government seeking an additional three days to comply with the December 20 order. Punjab advocate general Gurminder Singh informed the bench about the farmers' proposal to the Centre on holding talks following which Dallewal would avail medical aid, PTI reported. The bench had refrained from commenting on the negotiations or the law and order situation. "If something happens, which is acceptable to both sides and all stakeholders concerned, we will be equally happy. At the moment, we are only concerned with the compliance of our orders. If you want more time, we in peculiar circumstances are inclined to grant you some time," it said. The top court then posted the matter on January 2 for the compliance of its order on shifting of Dallewal to a hospital. On December 28, the top court came down heavily on the Punjab government for not moving Dallewal to a hospital even as it doubted the intention of the agitating farmers for resisting availability of medical aid to their septuagenarian leader. The Punjab government said it faced huge resistance from the protesting farmers.

Centre begins land identification process for ex-PM Manmohan Singh's memorial

Agencies : The Centre has started the process of identifying the site for setting up a memorial to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away last Thursday. According to a PTI report, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) officials visited sites around the Sanjay Gandhi memorial in the Rashtriya Smriti Sthal and identified some spots where a memorial could come up. The government has started the process of identifying a site for setting up a memorial to former prime minister Manmohan Singh and is in touch with his family to finalise the location. The government is in touch with Singh's family and has discussed three or four options for the memorial's location, the PTI report quoting sources added. No site had been finalised yet and everything would be done in consultation with the former prime minister's family.

Himachal News: CBI raids ED office Shimla for the third time, records scrutinized for 4 hours; officials questioned

Diary Times Desk : CBI officials raided the Shimla sub-zonal office of Enforcement Directorate (ED) for the third time on Tuesday. Two CBI officials reached the office at around 12 noon. During this time, they interrogated the employees and officials posted in the office. After four o'clock, these officers returned with the records. The CBI team is continuously knocking at the ED office in Shimla due to the money laundering case related to the scholarship scam. The CBI has arrested the brother of Assistant Director Vishal Deep and another person in this case. Vishal Deep Singh is out of the reach of CBI. To catch him, the CBI team is knocking at the doors in Delhi, Haryana, Punjab. It is worth noting that the ED headquarters has changed the staff of Shimla in the case of bribe demanded from the operators of private educational institutions accused in the scholarship scam. The CBI action in the case of demanding a bribe of 2.5 crores in two complaint.



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DIARY TIMES

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Himachal News: Now you will get relief from the hassle of uploading documents repeatedly, OTR will be implemented in the State Selection Commission

Diary Times Desk : One Time Registration (OTR) system will be implemented in Himachal Pradesh State Selection Commission. In such a situation, candidates will no longer have to upload their certificates on the commission's website again and again. The application is considered complete when the formalities of uploading certificates during the application are completed. It will be mandatory to upload the certificates of minimum qualification by filling the required column. These certificates will be safe in OTR like a DigiLocker. While filling the form, the category number of the certificates saved in OTR will have to be filled. The State Selection Commission has prepared the blueprint of the system. In principle approval has been received from the Chairman of the Commission for this work. Now the proposal has been sent to the state government for permission for expenditure. In such a situation, now this system will be adopted by the State Selection Commission in the upcoming recruitments. With this system, the Commission will be able to get accurate data of eligible candidates. In the new system, only those candidates will be able to apply, whose qualification documents are complete. Provision has also been made to link the facility of DigiLocker in the OTR system, so that documents can be taken online from DigiLocker. This system will be completely online. Candidates will not need to take any kind of print out. There is a plan to get this work done by the Electronic Corporation of the Himachal Pradesh Government. A proposal in this regard has been prepared by the Deputy Director IT of Himachal Pradesh State Selection Commission Narendra Kumar.

Stuck In Rajasthan Borewell For 10 Days, 3-Year-Old Dies Hours After Rescue

Agencies : A three-year-old child who fell into a borewell in Rajasthan's Kotputli 10 days ago, died shortly after she was rescued. Chetna, who was rescued after five failed attempts, was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for medical attention. Hospital authorities said during examination, they found her dead. The hospital's medical officer Dr Chetanya Rawat said: "She was brought in and immediately moved to the emergency room, where a special bed was set up for examination. After the doctors performed a procedure, they confirmed the child was no longer alive. The body was then transferred to the morgue. The postmortem examination has been completed as per the collector's orders." Chetna was stuck in a 700-feet borewell in Badiyali ki Dhani of Kiratpura village of Kotputli. She had fallen in on the afternoon of December.

Himachal: From the new year, students will fail in class 5th and 8th also, government will end the no detention policy

Diary Times Desk : In Himachal, students will also fail in class V and VIII from the year 2025. After the decision of the central government, the Himachal government is also preparing to stop the no detention policy. Students who fail in class V and VIII will get two chances to pass the examination. Himachal Pradesh has been opposing the no detention policy since the decision of the no detention policy was implemented in the country. Now, with the decision of the Center to end this policy, a new system will be implemented in the state from the upcoming academic session. Education department officials have started preparing a proposal in this regard. The matter was discussed in the departmental review meeting chaired by Education Minister Rohit Thakur at the State Secretariat on Tuesday. The Education Minister directed to prepare a proposal keeping in mind all aspects. Let us tell you that making a big change in school education, the Central Government has abolished the no-detention policy for class V and VIII in schools. This policy allows failing those students who are unable to pass the year-end examinations. Department officials said that the state had decided to fail students in class 5th and 8th during the amendment made under the Right to Education Act.

School Bus Flips Over In Kerala, Class 5 Student Falls, Crushed Under Wheels

Agencies : A Class 5 student was killed after a school bus she was travelling in flipped over in Kerala's Kannur on Wednesday. The incident took place at around 4pm in Valakkai in Sreekantapuram, when the bus belonging to Chinmaya Vidyalaya in Kurumathur panchayat, with 15 students onboard, was travelling down a slope while entering a highway. The students were getting dropped home after school. According to the police, 11-year-old Nedya S Rajesh was thrown out of the bus and crushed under the wheels after the driver lost control. Sources said an alleged brake failure caused the accident but the police said a detailed probe is underway. Thirteen students, who sustained injuries, were rushed to Taliparamba Taluk Hospital by local residents for treatment. The girl's body was shifted to Government Medical College at Pariyaram. There was no immediate comment from the school authorities. Police said a case under sections 281 (rash driving or riding on a public way), 125 (A).

Himachal: IAS officers Harbans Kheda and RD Nazim became Additional Chief Secretaries, Himachal government gave the gift of promotion

Diary Times Desk : Himachal government has promoted two IAS officers Bharat Kheda and RD Nazim as Additional Chief Secretaries. On the recommendations of the screening committee, the personnel department issued promotion orders on Wednesday. These two officers of 1995 cadre have got the gift of promotion on completion of 30 years of service in IAS. Both these officers were earlier appointed on the post of Principal Secretary. Bharat Kheda is serving in the center on deputation, so he has got promotion on the basis of performance. After returning to the state, he will be given the promoted designation. RD Nazim is working on the post of Principal Secretary in the state government. He is in charge of the Industries, Transport and Food Supply Department. Both the promoted officers will get the apex scale of Level 17 of Pay Matrix, Rs 2,25,000. On getting the promotion of RD Nazim, there was a long queue of people congratulating him in the secretariat on Wednesday. Now the number of Additional Chief Secretaries in the Himachal Pradesh government has become three. Apart from KK Pant and Omkar Sharma, RD Nazim has also become Additional Chief Secretary. Anuradha Thakur and Bharat Kheda have been promoted on performance basis as they are on central deputation. When these officers return to the Himachal government, they will be given the post of Additional Chief Secretary. Chief Secretary Prabodh Saxena is going to retire in March this year. In such a situation, speculations have started about who will be the new Chief Secretary of the state. Apart from the Chief Minister's Principal Advisor Sanjay Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary KK Pant, Anuradha Thakur and Omkar Sharma are also in the race for CS.

"Toxicity, Abuse": Post By Delhi Cafe Owner's Wife Days Before His Suicide

Agencies : Less than a week before Delhi cafe owner Puneet Khurana died by suicide, his estranged wife and business partner Manika Pahwa had put up a cryptic post on social media stating that she had been subjected to "toxicity and narcissistic abuse" and was now free. The couple, co-owners of the popular Woodbox Cafe in Delhi, were going through a divorce. Khurana (40) was found hanging in his room in Model Town's Kalyan Vihar area on New Year's Eve. He had spoken to Manika on Monday night and recorded the conversation, in which the couple can be heard fighting over issues related to the business. Khurana's family has blamed Ms Pahwa for his death and said she "instigated him" to die by suicide. In her post on Instagram from six days ago, Ms Pahwa said she is healing well "after all the toxicity and narcissistic abuse" and was trying to "be better and to be indifferent" every day. Without naming anyone, she said higher powers would decide what was best for her "abusers". "Well feminism suits me, as idealistic values are my core & feminism means giving & getting mere respect. To one another.



Himachal: Hotel manager dies in Dalhousie, Himachal Pradesh, two accused policemen arrested; also suspended from job

Diary Times Desk : The hotel manager died in a fight with police personnel in a private hotel in Banikhet of tourist city Dalhousie. A hotel employee is seriously injured in this, who has been referred to Tanda. At the same time, the police have arrested two police personnel on the charge of murder. They have also been suspended from the job. On the other hand, angry family members and villagers protested against the police on Wednesday and blocked the Chamba-Bharmaur National Highway for five hours. According to information from the police, both the accused police personnel were going back to Chamba at night after doing duty on the night of New Year in Dalhousie. During that time, they went to a private hotel near Banikhet. Where they had a clash with the hotel manager over some matter. During this, the hotel manager and another employee fell down from the ramp and got badly injured. When they were taken to Dalhousie hospital, the hotel manager died during treatment there. While other employees were referred to Tanda after first aid.



HP High Court: Order to remove encroachments from buildings higher than 21 meters on NH in Barog, know the whole matter

Diary Times Desk : The Himachal Pradesh High Court has issued orders to remove the encroachment made in multi-storey buildings built against the rules on the National Highway in Barog, Solan. Under the notification issued by the state government, the court said that if the height of the building is above the prescribed 21 meters, then it should be removed. The court was told by the defendants that when these buildings were constructed, the rules of TCP were not applicable in the area. This area was under the Panchayats. A division bench of Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia and Satyen Vaidya heard the case. The division bench has asked the defendants to file an affidavit in the next hearing in this case. The court has asked the government what is the mechanism for constructing the buildings? The government told the court that permission has to be taken from the Pollution Control Board first. Buildings are constructed keeping in mind the map, design, soil testing and engineer's report.

HRTC will issue smart discount cards in the new year, Himachal will become the first state in North India

Diary Times Desk : On the lines of foreign countries, people of Himachal will also use smart discount cards while travelling in buses. Himachal Path Parivahan Nigam (HRTC) is going to provide Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) card facility to passengers on the new year. This card, which looks like an ATM card, will be tapped on the e-ticketing machine and the ticket will be issued with the discount offered on the card. Around 80,000 people in the state are availing the facility of concessional travel in the corporation's buses. These include school children and employees, besides yellow card, green card and Samman card holders. After the validity of the existing card expires, now only RFID cards will be issued to the people. It is also proposed to make the facility of issuing this card available online for passengers on the corporation's website. The HRTC management has prepared the card.

Solan News: Private school operator murdered in Solan, accused absconding, know the whole matter



Diary Times Desk : On the first day of the new year, a case of murder of the director of a reputed private school in Solan has come to light. It is being told that the accused was a relative of the director. There was an altercation between the two over some issue, due to which the accused killed him with a sharp weapon. At present, the police has taken the body to MMU Hospital for post-mortem. At the same time, the police team has also left to catch the accused. SP Solan Gaurav Singh said that the director of a private school has been murdered. The police has left to catch the accused. The accused will be arrested soon. It will be revealed soon what the murder was about.

Himachal: Rs 21.40 crore to border areas with strict conditions, along with this the Centre gave a warning to the state government

Diary Times Desk : The central government has released the budget with strict conditions for the areas of Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti bordering the China border. The Center has released Rs 21.40 crore to the state government under the Border Area Development Program (BADP) and has also given clear instructions that if the budget is not spent as per the rules, it will be reduced from the next budget. The Border Management Department of the Union Home Ministry has released this budget to the state government with these instructions. The central government has released this amount as the central share, while the Himachal Pradesh government has been asked to spend its share of Rs 2 crore 37 lakh 80 thousand for this. If any kind of income or interest etc. is taken on this budget, then it will have to be deposited in the Consolidated Fund.

Himachal News: The battle for the post of Animal Husbandry Director reached Delhi, he wrote a letter to the government and claimed his candidature

Diary Times Desk : There is a fierce competition among the departmental officers to become the director of the Animal Husbandry Department. The special thing is that the fight to get promoted to the post of director has reached Delhi. These days there is a lot of competition to become the director in the department. Joint Director Dr. Sanjeev Dhiman has written a letter to the state government and requested to promote him on the basis of merit and seniority criteria and appoint him to the post of Director of Animal Husbandry Department. Joint Director Dr. Vishal Sharma has also written a letter to the government and raised the demand to promote him to the post of Director on the criteria of seniority. After the exercise of giving 6 months' service extension.

Shimla Car Accident: Car falls into a ditch in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, three youths die



Diary Times Desk : A tragic road accident took place near a petrol pump at Matiyana in Theog, Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh on New Year's Eve at around 12:45 on Tuesday night. Three youths from Kinnaur have died in the accident. These three youths were going from Shimla to Rampur in their car (number HP 02AA-0169). During this, on reaching Matiyana, their car suddenly went out of control near the petrol pump and fell into a deep ditch. All the three youths in the car died on the spot in the accident. DSP Theog Siddharth Sharma has confirmed the case. At the same time, the family members have expressed anger over conducting the post-mortem without permission.

Defence Ministry targets 2025 to be 'year of reforms', Rajnath Singh says focus on cyber and space domains

Agencies : Centre plans to step up on defence-related reforms in 2025, with focus on cyber and space domains, along with emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. The focus will also be on positioning India as a 'credible exporter' of defence products, and encourage more public-private partnerships, said the Ministry. At a meeting of all defence secretaries, Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh said the 'Year of Reforms' will be 'momentous' in modernising the Armed Forces. "It will lay the foundation for unprecedented advancements in the country's defence preparedness, thus preparing to ensure the security and sovereignty of the nation amidst the challenges of the 21st century," Rajnath Singh said. Industry can expect more collaboration across various stakeholders in the defence ecosystem, given the renewed focus expected from the top deck. The statement from Defence Ministry said more public-private partnerships will be promoted.

PM Modi's New Global Initiative Gets Big Praise From Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar

Agencies : Prime Minister Narendra Modi's latest initiative - under 'Create in India' - to take Indian cinema and content global at a faster pace and greater scale - has earned praise from industry stalwarts Shah Rukh Khan and Akshay Kumar. In 2024's last 'Mann Ki Baat' radio address to the nation on December 29, PM Modi announced that India will host the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit or WAVES for the first time in February. Speaking about it in detail, the prime minister said the initiative will be a global platform for Indian creative talents, fostering collaborations and showcasing the country's potential as a hub for world-class content creation. Talking about the vision for the global entertainment summit, PM Modi explained that it will be comparable to global events like the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "Leaders from the media and entertainment industry worldwide will gather for the summit," he said, adding that content creators, social media influencers, and creative minds from across the globe will be part of the global event too. "This Summit is an important step towards making India a hub of global content."

AAP vs BJP Letter War On New Year's Day, Arvind Kejriwal Writes To RSS Head



Agencies : Amid the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) campaign for the Delhi Election, party convener Arvind Kejriwal has shot off a letter to Mohan Bhagwat, the chief of BJP's ideological parent RSS, and asked several questions on the BJP's politics. Mr Kejriwal has asked if the RSS supports the BJP's "wrongdoings". "BJP leaders are openly distributing money, does RSS support buying votes? The names of Dalit and Purvanchali voters are being struck off (from voter lists) on a large scale. Does RSS think this is good for democracy? Doesn't RSS feel that the BJP is weakening democracy?" Mr Kejriwal has asked. The letter is clearly aimed at embarrassing the BJP amid a bitter campaign for the capital contest. While AAP has alleged that the BJP is getting voters' names struck off the list in a desperate attempt to win the election, the BJP has accused the ruling party of getting fake voters' names added to the list to bolster its support. The BJP responded sharply to Mr Kejriwal's letter with a letter.

'Saved Their Honour': UP Man Kills Mother, 4 Sisters

Agencies : The 24-year-old man accused of murdering his mother and four sisters at a hotel in Lucknow has said in a chilling video that he committed the killings because he did not want his "sisters to be sold". In the video, which emerged hours after the shocking crime, Arshad alleges that neighbours and land mafia in their hometown Budaun captured their house and planned to traffick his sisters. In the video, Arshad said he killed his mother and three sisters and the fourth was about to die. He also showed the bodies and said he choked them and slit their wrists and that his father helped him. The victims have been identified as his mother Asma and sisters Alia (9), Alishia (19), Aksha and Rahmeen (18).

'Dared Him To Die By Suicide': Delhi Cafe Owner's Family Targets His Wife

Agencies : Puneet Khurana's (40) estranged wife Manika Pahwa and her family had been torturing him mentally and that drove him to the edge, the Delhi businessman's family has alleged after he died by suicide at his Model Town residence yesterday. Puneet's sister told news agency ANI, "Manika Pahwa, her parents and her sister forced my brother, stressed him out, instigated him by saying, 'you can't do anything, die by suicide if you dare'. Puneet shot a video before his death, it is on his phone."

Delhi Witnesses Massive Traffic Jams On New Year's Day

Agencies : Several roads in Delhi were jam-packed and long queues formed at key metro stations as huge crowds thronged to India Gate, Connaught Place and religious places across the national capital on New Year's Day. The C-Hexagon at India Gate saw a massive crowd gathering on Kartavya Path, leading to traffic congestion in the area. Other key spots attracting large crowds included Bangla Sahib Gurdwara, Prachin Hanuman Mandir at Connaught Place, Akshardham Mandir, Jhandewalan Mandir, Khatu Shyam Mandir on GT Road.

Congress Leader Asks 'Why PM Can't Visit Manipur', Chief Minister Responds

Agencies : In a sharp counter to senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's question on why Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not visited violence-hit Manipur, Chief Minister N Biren Singh has asked why former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao did not travel to the Northeastern state during the turmoil in 1992-93. Addressing the media on the last day of 2024, Chief Minister Singh yesterday said it had been an unfortunate year for Manipur and hoped peace would be restored this year. "This entire year has been very unfortunate. I want to say sorry to the people of the state for what's happening till today since last May 3. Many people lost their loved ones. Many people left their homes. I feel regret. I apologise. But now, I hope after seeing the last three to four months progress towards the peace, I believe by 2025, the normalcy will be restored in the state," he said.



OpenAI Whistleblower Suchir Balaji's Parents Say Autopsy Points To Murder

Agencies : The parents of Suchir Balaji, a former employee ChatGPT maker OpenAI, have alleged that his autopsy had shown signs of struggle such as a head injury. Twenty-six-year-old Balaji, who had flagged ethical concerns about OpenAI's functioning after he left the Artificial Intelligence giant, was found dead at his San Francisco flat in November. Authorities have said he had died by suicide. Balaji's parents Balaji Ramamurthy and Purnima Rao spoke to NDTV about their son's tragic death and their fight for justice. "We read the second autopsy, there are signs of struggle such as head injury, more details from the autopsy reveal it is murder," his mother said. Recounting his last conversation with his son, Mr Ramamurthy said, "He was returning from a birthday trip from Los Angeles where he went with his friends, he was happy. He told me he wanted to go to Las Vegas for CES (a tech show) in January. At the end, he said he was going for dinner," he said. Born and raised in California, Suchir Balaji worked with OpenAI for nearly four years as a researcher. He quit in August, protesting against the AI giant's business practices. Suchir alleged that OpenAI had violated US copyright law and voiced his concern in a report in The New York Times, titled 'Former OpenAI Researcher Says the Company Broke Copyright Law'.

Russia Attacks Central Kyiv With Drones, Two Killed

Agencies : Russia launched an aerial attack on the centre of Kyiv in the first hours of 2025, killing two people and drawing fresh anger from officials towards Moscow. The attack -- a rare strike on the heart of the Ukrainian capital -- came just hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed in a New Year's message that he would do everything possible to bring the war to an end over the next 12 months. Ukraine's state emergency services said two were killed, six wounded and four pulled from the rubble after Russian drones were fired towards the capital. Local officials said the damage was caused by falling debris, suggesting the drones had been intercepted. AFP journalists in the city heard multiple powerful explosions early on Wednesday.

'Lack of humanity': Why Azerbaijan is angry with Russia over plane crash

Agencies : With Azerbaijan in mourning this week over the Christmas Day plane crash that claimed 38 lives, political scientist Farhad Mammadov's mind raced back to November 2020. Then, on the last day of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Azerbaijan shot down a Russian helicopter near its border, while it was in Armenian airspace. "Immediately, the president of Azerbaijan called the president of Russia, took the blame for himself, for the country, brought an apology, and then there was the punishment of the guilty and the payment of compensation," said Mammadov, who is the director of the Baku-based Center for Studies of the South Caucasus. On December 25, Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243 took off from Baku bound for Grozny in Chechnya, with 67 passengers and crew onboard. As the plane neared Grozny in Russian airspace, it appeared to have come under fire from the ground and changed course east, crashing near Aktau in western Kazakhstan. Only 29 people survived.



Driver Tried To Hit As Many People As Possible: Cops On New Orleans Attack



Agencies : A man who drove a pickup truck into New Year's revellers in New Orleans tried to "run over as many people as he possibly could", US police said Wednesday. The driver "was hellbent on creating the carnage and the damage that he did", Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick told journalists after at least 10 people were killed in the southern US city. The status and whereabouts of the driver were not immediately known. Although the incident was not being treated as a terror attack, Kirkpatrick said the truck had been driven at "very high speed" and in a "very intentional" manner. Operational command of the investigation will be taken by the FBI, she added. Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry described the incident as a "horrific act of violence." New Orleans is one of the most heavily visited destinations in the United States and the incident came shortly before the city hosts a major football game, known as the Sugar Bowl, featuring teams from the University of Georgia and Notre Dame.

Russia and Ukraine end five decades of gas transit to Europe

Agencies : Russia stopped sending gas to Europe via Ukraine, shutting off a route that's operated for five decades after Kyiv refused to allow any transit that funds Moscow's war machine. Both sides confirmed the halt on Wednesday after a key transit deal expired. The stoppage means a number of central European countries that have relied on the flows will be forced to source more expensive gas elsewhere, adding to pressure on supplies at a time when the region is depleting winter storage at the fastest pace in years. Ukraine has been a key avenue for gas deliveries into Europe, even during the past three years of war. While the route accounts for just 5% of the region's needs, countries are still reeling from the aftershocks of an energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of its neighbor. The looming cutoff recently helped drive up gas prices.

Chinese President Xi Jinping reaffirms aim for reunification with Taiwan

Agencies : Chinese President Xi Jinping underlined that no one could prevent China's 'reunification' with Taiwan, and affirmed that China will continue its "united front" efforts. In his New Year's message on Tuesday, Xi also highlighted China's aim to strengthen international cooperation, promote mutual understanding, and build a community with a shared future for humanity. Earlier, Chinese Ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, said in a post on X, "On New Year's Eve, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered his 2025 New Year message via China Media Group and the Internet." "We Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same family. No one can ever sever the bond of kinship between us, and no one can ever stop China's reunification, a trend of the times," Xi Jinping said. He also stressed that China will work with other countries to ensure enhanced cooperation.

Abu Dhabi welcomes 2025 with fireworks and drone show, setting Guinness world records

Agencies : Abu Dhabi dazzled the world with an unforgettable New Year's Eve celebration, hosting the largest fireworks display at the Sheikh Zayed Festival in Al Wathba. The breathtaking spectacle, which lasted 50 minutes, captivated audiences and set six new Guinness World Records. Alongside the fireworks, a mesmerising 6,000-drone show illuminated the skies for over 20 minutes, forming intricate aerial art that left viewers in awe. The festival's grand finale built up anticipation with fireworks displays every hour from 6 p.m., culminating in a record-breaking midnight showcase that lit up the Emirati capital. Several iconic locations across Abu Dhabi, including Yas Island and the Corniche, joined in the celebrations with their own stunning pyrotechnics. Videos of the event flooded Instagram, showcasing the vibrant energy and breathtaking scenes as fireworks burst across the night sky. The celebrations reflected Abu Dhabi's commitment to outshining its previous records. In 2023, the Sheikh Zayed Festival earned global recognition with a 40-minute fireworks show, setting three Guinness World Records for time, formation, and quantity. Last year, the festival also created the world's largest aerial logo using over 5,000 drones. This year, Yas Island hosted its renowned fireworks displays at 9 p.m. and midnight.

'Deliberate act': SGPC demands judicial probe into UP encounter



Justice Harpreet Singh Brar appointed permanent judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court

Agencies : Less than two years after Justice Harpreet Singh Brar was sworn in as an additional judge, the President of India has appointed him as a permanent judge of the of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. As of now, the high court has 51 judges against the sanctioned strength of 85. Justice Brar was sworn in as an additional judge on April 10, 2023. Born on December 20, 1975, Justice Brar comes from a family with deep legal roots. His father, Gurbachan Singh Brar, served as Deputy District Attorney and Additional Advocate-General for Punjab. Justice Brar completed his matriculation from DAV High School, Sri Muktsar Sahib, in 1990, and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Panjab University in 1995. He later pursued a Bachelor of Laws degree from Department of Laws, Panjab University, Chandigarh, completing it in 1999. Enrolling as an advocate with Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana in May 2000, Justice Brar built an illustrious legal career. He served as Punjab Additional Advocate-General from 2009 to 2014 and as panel counsel for multiple state bodies, including Punjab Urban Planning and Development Authority, Punjab Pollution Control Board, and Punjab Energy Development Agency.

Court grants bail to MC employee in alleged bribery case

Agencies : The CBI court has granted bail to Kamleshwar Nehra, a leading fireman of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, who was arrested in an alleged bribery case. Nehra was arrested on November 7, along with Manimajra station fire officer Dasseheru Singh, while allegedly accepting bribes from a complainant. According to CBI, the agency received a complaint that the accused officers were demanding bribes to expedite the issuance of an NOC required under fire safety regulations. The complainant, who was unwilling to pay the bribe, contacted the agency and filed a complaint. After a preliminary inquiry, CBI laid a trap and arrested both accused for allegedly accepting Rs 80,000 as bribe.

Agencies : The SGPC executive on Tuesday demanded a judicial inquiry into the killing of three Punjab youths in a police encounter in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh. On December 23, a joint team of the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh police killed three suspected terrorists, who were allegedly involved in a grenade attack on a police post in Gurdaspur, in an encounter in Pilibhit's Puranpur. During a meeting of the executive, which was held under the chairmanship of SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhama, a resolution, raising serious questions over the police encounter, was passed. "This is a very serious matter and it seems like a deliberate act to target Punjab's youths," the resolution read, which also termed the encounter a serious violation of the human rights. The SGPC also passed a resolution rejecting the demand for excommunicating former terrorist Narain Singh Chaura from the Panth. Chaura recently tried to assassinate SAD leader Sukhbir Singh Badal outside the Golden Temple.

Punjab govt team meets Dallewal, protesting farmers at Khanauri

Agencies : The Punjab government on Wednesday continued with its efforts to persuade farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal to take medical aid, with former additional DGP Jaskaran Singh saying discussions in this regard were also held with farmer leaders. Over the past few days, a state government's team led by Jaskaran Singh has made several attempts to convince Dallewal, whose indefinite hunger strike completed 37 days on Wednesday, to take medical help, but so far he has refused. Earlier, the apex court gave the Punjab government time until December 31 to persuade Dallewal to shift to a hospital, granting the state the liberty to seek logistical support from the Centre, if necessary. On Tuesday, a vacation bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia took note of a plea moved by Punjab government seeking an additional three days to comply with the SC's December 20 order. The top court had posted the matter for January 2 for the compliance of its order on shifting of Dallewal to a hospital.

PPSC announces final results for 37 Assistant Town Planner (Group A) posts



Agencies : The Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) has declared the final results for 37 posts of Assistant Town Planner (Group A) in the Department of Local Government. These positions are spread across various local bodies, including Municipal Corporations, Municipal Committees, Nagar Panchayats, and Improvement Trusts. A total of 587 candidates applied for the joint written examination, which took place on September 24, 2023. Following this, 49 candidates were shortlisted for interviews held from December 31, 2024, to January 1, 2025. The combined merit list and category-wise merit lists are now available on the official PPSC website (www.ppsc.gov.in). According to PPSC chairman Jatinder Singh Aulakh, the entire recruitment process was conducted in a fair, transparent, and impartial manner.

Devotee killed, 15 injured in accident on Chandigarh-Hisar highway

Agencies : A tragic road accident on the Chandigarh-Hisar national highway claimed the life of a 45-year-old devotee and left 15 others injured on the first morning of the new year. The accident occurred around 6 am between Batta and Kailram villages near Kalayat. A pick-up vehicle carrying devotees from Kurukshetra's Boda village, who were returning home after visiting a religious site in Rajasthan, rammed into a stationary truck. The deceased, identified as Gurumukh, was among the devotees traveling in the pick-up vehicle. Locals reported that the truck had broken down and was parked on the road without proper warning signs, leading to the collision. SHO Jaibhagwan and his team rushed to the spot after receiving a distress call from passersby. With the help of locals, the injured were rescued from the severely damaged vehicle and rushed to the district hospital for treatment. "A case has been registered against the truck driver based on a complaint. The injured are currently undergoing treatment in Kaithal, and Gurumukh's body has been handed over to his family after the postmortem examination," said SHO Jaibhagwan.

Farmers gear up for January 4 Kisan mahapanchayat in Tohana

Agencies : In preparation for the national-level kisan mahapanchayat scheduled for January 4 in Tohana, Fatehabad, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) Haryana has intensified its efforts to mobilise farmers. As part of this initiative, the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), an SKM member, held a meeting in Karnal, attended by office-bearers from three districts. BKU state president Rattan Mann criticised the government for failing to address the farmers' longstanding demands. He warned of "dire consequences" if the government continued to delay action. Farmers at the meeting raised slogans against the government and dismissed its claims of procuring 24 crops at minimum support price (MSP) in Haryana. Mann accused the Chief Minister of misleading farmers. "Instead of making false statements, the CM must secure a guarantee letter from the Union government for an MSP law," Mann demanded. He further alleged that the BJP government has consistently neglected farmers' issues, forcing them into nationwide protests. They also voiced concerns about the deteriorating health of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal.

Shimla Winter Carnival resumes January 2 with Satinder Sartaj's performance

Diary Times Desk : The second edition of Shimla's Winter Carnival, postponed due to the demise of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, is set to resume from January 2 onwards. Renowned Punjabi singer Satinder Sartaj will kick off the resumed carnival with a performance on Thursday. Other notable performances include Bollywood singers and Himachali folk singers. The carnival, initially scheduled to conclude earlier, will now wrap up on January 8, as announced by Shimla Mayor Surender Chauhan. To pay respects to the late former PM, the carnival's cultural programmes were temporarily halted. However, the installed stalls remained operational throughout. This year's carnival promises to be even more spectacular, building on the success of its inaugural edition in 2023. The event, inaugurated by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, drew massive crowds from across India. Although the New Year's Eve celebrations were subdued due to the lack of cultural programmes and live music, tourists still managed to enjoy the evening with impromptu singing and dancing.

Displaced 45 years ago, 5 families yet to get ownership of alternative land

Diary Times Desk : Five families from Malhanu village in Balh tehsil of Mandi district filed petitions with the Chairman of the Legislative Assembly Petition Committee in Shimla yesterday seeking ownership rights over the land that was promised to them in 1979. The families, displaced by the Beas Sutlej Link Project, have been waiting for nearly half a century to receive formal ownership of the land granted to them in exchange for their acquired land. The five petitioners — Shankar, Parma Nand, Atma Ram, Balak Ram, and Mani Ram — were among the many displaced by the construction of a canal for the Beas-Sutlej Link Project. According to these families, under a state government policy for displaced families, these individuals were allocated a total of 36 bighas. The possession of this land.

Massive fire engulfs Kullu village, property worth over Rs 10 crore gutted



Diary Times Desk : A devastating fire swept through Tandri village in Kullu's Banjar subdivision, reducing around 20 houses, fodder, and cow sheds to ashes. The fire, which started from a fodder shed, spread rapidly due to strong winds and the predominantly wooden construction of the houses. According to Banjar SDM Pankaj Sharma, the primary loss is estimated to be around Rs 10 crore, with ornaments and jewellery in the 'kothi' (store) of deity Gadpati Sheshnag also destroyed in the blaze. Fortunately, there were no casualties or livestock losses reported. The fire tenders from Banjar, Lurgi, and Kullu were rushed to the scene, but the flames were not fully doused until the filing of this report. The SDM said the district administration has provided relief materials, food, and shelter to the affected families, with temporary tents to be pitched if required. Kullu district has witnessed several major fire incidents in recent years.

CM Sukhu urges wealthy to surrender power subsidy, leads by example

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has made an appeal to the well-off citizens of the state to voluntarily surrender their power subsidies, citing that only the needy and deserving should benefit from it. Sukhu, leading by example, has surrendered his own power subsidy, along with his cabinet colleagues and Congress MLAs. "It is optional, and not compulsory to surrender the power subsidy. I feel those who can afford to pay must surrender the 125 units of free power subsidy voluntarily, as a moral responsibility, so that the well-deserved can benefit from it," he said while addressing a press conference here today. The Chief Minister explained that the perma for voluntary surrender of free power is available on the HPSEB website, and citizens can also opt-out by calling a designated number or submitting the form at the nearest electricity board office. "There are five electricity meters in my name at places where I own houses. So, despite being a CM, I am availing 625 units of free power, which is not right," he added. Sukhu highlighted that HPSEB will save approximately Rs 200 crore by this voluntary surrender, which will improve the financial health of the board.

Himachal names public admn institute after Manmohan Singh

Diary Times Desk : As a mark of respect to the economic expertise and able leadership of Manmohan Singh, the Himachal Government on Wednesday named the Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA) at Mashobra near here after the former PM. "It was solely due to the wise economic policies pursued by Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister that India overcame the economic crisis, a global phenomenon at that point of time," said CM Sukhvinder Sukhu. He said it is most appropriate to name HIPA after the former PM, who laid the foundation of India becoming a leading world economy. HIPA, located at Fairlawn, Mashobra, about 12 km from here, was set up on January 1, 1974. HIPA imparts training to officers not just from Himachal but also to some other organisations. He said this is a befitting tribute to the former PM on a day when HIPA is celebrating its 50st foundation day. "The world admired his fiscal wisdom as Manmohan Singh in his capacity as Finance Minister led India on the path of prosperity when the world was grappling with a severe economic crisis.

Tourists face steep airfare hike from Dharamsala to Delhi

Diary Times Desk : Tourists who visited Dharamsala for the year-end vacation are facing a costly return journey to Delhi. Many tourists have complained that airline companies have abnormally increased fares from Dharamsala to Delhi, expecting that tourists would return to their jobs in the first few days of January. According to Ashutosh Sharma, a tourist who visited Dharamsala for the year-end vacation, airfare for a one-way trip from Dharamsala to Delhi have touched Rs 15,122 to Rs 18,114. Sharma expressed his disappointment, stating that airfares from Dharamsala to Delhi are costlier than return tickets from many South East Asian countries. "It's like gouging consumers," he said. The high airfares from Dharamsala to Delhi have also been criticised by the hotel and tourism industry in the region. Sanjeev Gandhi, general secretary of Smart City Dharamsala Hotel and Restaurant Association, said that many tourists who came from Delhi complained about the high airfares on their return journey. "Such airfares are the highest in the country and are bringing a bad name to Dharamsala's tourism industry," he said.



ICC Test Rankings: Jasprit Bumrah records highest-ever rating points by an Indian bowler

Agencies : India fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah created history on Wednesday, January 1. In the latest ICC Test Rankings, Bumrah not only remained at the top of the bowler's list but also recorded the highest-ever rating points by an Indian bowler. The pacer reaped rewards for his sensational performances in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Bumrah has been the standout bowler in the marquee bilateral series so far, with 30 wickets from 4 matches. Bumrah's exceptional performances however have not reflected in the results, as the hapless Indian side have lost 2 out of the first four matches of the series. Bumrah, who is shortlisted for the ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year award for the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy and also the ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year award, has moved up from his previous tied high of 904 with Ravichandran Ashwin. His tally of 907 rating points now places him joint-17th in the all-time list with yesteryear spinner Derek Underwood of England. The list is led by England seamers Sydney Barnes (932) and George Lohmann (931) who played more than a century ago while Imran Khan (922).



Short TAKES

Cricket-South Africa seeking ruthless edge against Pakistan in second test

Agencies : South Africa have already sealed their place in this year's World Test Championship final ahead of the second and final test against Pakistan at Newlands on Friday but will want to keep their momentum going in the longest format. South Africa beat Pakistan by two wickets in a tense first test in Pretoria and have won their last six red ball matches in a row, their joint best run since a team record nine victories in succession in 2002 and 2003. This form has propelled them into the WTC final at Lord's in June but questions around their brittle batting line-up will be a major focus on what has recently been a perilous Newlands pitch. The previous test played there against India 12 months ago lasted only 107 overs as the visitors won by seven wickets inside two days, the shortest test that has had a winner in history. The wicket should be better this time round, but at a ground that used to be a fortress for the home team, they have lost two of their last three tests in Cape Town. "We definitely haven't been clinical or ruthless when the opportunity or the situation is called upon," South Africa captain Temba Bavuma said. "But I think what we've done is that we've found ways to make sure that the result is on our side."

Ex-Australia Star Backs 'Genius' All-Rounder Nitish Reddy For Promotion In Sydney Test

Agencies : Former Australia captain Michael Clarke believes India's young all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy has been underrated throughout the BGT series and rooted for his promotion in the batting order. Nitish has introduced himself to the world with swagger in style in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy. In the first innings of the Boxing Day Test, when India found itself reduced to 191/6, Nitish set the MCG ablaze with a memorable performance. He toyed with Australian bowlers and delivered a swashbuckling performance in 'Pushpa' style to celebrate his fifty. He didn't slow down from there, instead upped the ante to convert it into his maiden Test ton. With emotions and prayers resonating at the MCG, Nitish chipped the ball away for a four, planted his bat on the ground and celebrated his first century for India in Test colours. "Reddy, this young kid batting at number eight, is a genius. I think he has definitely got to bat seven if not six. He has been India's leading run-scorer."

'Chess body is being controlled by a single player...': Magnus Carlsen attacked in unfiltered 'money and power' rant

Agencies : After Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi made the unprecedented decision to share the World Blitz title at the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship, American grandmaster Hans Niemann unleashed an explosive tirade on social media, accusing FIDE, the global governing body of chess, of bending to the will of the players. Niemann, who has been embroiled in controversy before, voiced his anger with sharp criticism of both Carlsen and FIDE. "The chess world is officially a joke. THIS HAS NEVER BEEN DONE IN HISTORY. I can't believe that the official body of chess is being controlled by a singular player FOR THE 2ND TIME THIS WEEK. THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE WORLD CHAMPION!" Niemann posted on X, condemning the shared title as an unacceptable break from tradition. Niemann, who has clashed with Carlsen in the past after being accused of cheating by the world No. 1 – an accusation that led to a high-profile lawsuit – was particularly vocal about the power dynamics at play. He labeled Carlsen as "judge, jury and executioner," referencing the control.

"I hope Mitchell Starc is out there...": McGrath amid star pacer's fitness concerns ahead of Sydney Test

Agencies : Former cricketer Glenn McGrath on Wednesday hoped that talisman Australian pacer Mitchell Starc would take part in the upcoming Sydney Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India. Australia clinched an 184-run victory over India in the Melbourne Test and took a 2-1 lead in the series, also ending India's chances of qualifying for the World Test Championship Final at Lord's early next year. Currently, Australia lead 2-1 over India in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The star Aussie pacer struggled to keep up with his fitness at the Melbourne Test of the BGT series against India. Starc struggled with his upper body during the long-format match. His discomfort was noticed when Starc was seen clutching his back during spells on Day 03 at the Melbourne Test. In order to help Australia defend the target of 330 runs on Day 05 and win the Boxing Day Test, Starc bowled at full pace despite struggling with his fitness. Speaking at SCG, McGrath said that Starc will be doing everything possible to be out in the middle and take part in the game.

"We Could Pass A Law...": What Australia PM Anthony Albanese Told Jasprit Bumrah At New Year's Party

Agencies : Ahead of the fifth Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test starting on Friday, the Indian and Australian teams met Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his fiancée Jodie Haydon in a New Year's reception at Kirribilli House on Wednesday. According to a report in The Sydney Morning Herald, Albanese also had some words for India's fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who has taken 30 wickets from four matches in the series so far. "We could pass a law here that says he has to bowl left-handed or off one step. Every time he has come onto bowl has been very exciting," he said in the 90-minute function. The report said Sam Konstas, Australia's latest entrant into Test cricket who lit up the MCG with 60 on debut in first innings, got a picture with his childhood hero Virat Kohli, who was in a shoulder collision with him, which led to the veteran getting a 20 per cent fine and a demerit point.

