

Himachal Water Scam: 10 officers suspended in the drinking water scam in Himachal Pradesh, water was transported in bikes and cars



Diary Times Desk : Ten officers of the Jal Shakti Department have been suspended on charges of drinking water supply scam that came to light in Theog subdivision of Shimla district. One of these officers has died. Their names have also been included in the suspension list. The suspended officers include two executives, three assistants, four juniors and one retired junior engineer. The state government has taken this action by taking the matter seriously. These officers have been attached to the Jal Shakti Department headquarters. All the contractors related to this have been blacklisted. Let us tell you that in the name of water supply through tankers, a scam of lakhs has come to light in Shimla district last summer. More than one crore rupees were paid to the contractor for supplying water through tankers. The vehicle numbers given in the name of tankers include motorcycles and cars, as well as an officer's official vehicle. Water supply through tankers was shown in two such villages where there is no road.

Our work in Delhi a blessing, real aapda is BJP, says Kerjwal

Agencies : Hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi dubbed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) a disaster ("aapda") in a wordplay on its name, former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal retaliated by accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of being the real "aapda" in the Capital due to the deteriorating law-and-order situation. Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister launched a slew of projects in Delhi and called for people to defeat the AAP in the upcoming assembly polls. Dismissing Modi's critique, Kejriwal lauded his government's achievements in education, health, and power, declaring them a "blessing" rather than a "disaster" for Delhiites.

As China Plans World's Largest Dam On Brahmaputra, India Sends A Reminder

Agencies : Last week China announced that it is building the world's largest dam in Tibet - even larger than the Three Gorges Dam, which according to NASA, has slowed the Earth's rotation by 0.06 seconds. But unlike that one, which is built in central China, the new one will be built in an environmentally-sensitive Himalayan zone in Tibet, very close to the border with India. Besides the impact on the environment, the region is geologically fragile too as it falls in a high seismic zone and hence is prone to earthquakes of a relatively higher magnitude. These are two of several concerns New Delhi has about the gigantic project planned on the Brahmaputra river - which China calls by the name Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet. Days after Beijing's announcement about the mega project, New Delhi responded today, saying India will "protect its interests". It also sent a reminder to Beijing reiterating its rights to the waters of the river while also seeking transparency over Beijing's plans.



'Must get a fair trial': India on rejection of Hindu monk's bail plea in Bangladesh

Agencies : India on Friday called for a fair trial for those arrested in Bangladesh, this after jailed Hindu monk Chinmoy Das's bail plea was rejected by a local court in the neighbouring country. "We expect that those people who have been arrested in Bangladesh must get a fair trial and this is our appeal," ANI quoted ministry of external affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal as saying. Das, a former ISKCON leader, was arrested on November 25 on sedition charges. According to an ANI report, his lawyer told the court that the priest respects the motherland "like his mother" and is not a traitor. The bail request was turned down by Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Saiful Islam after hearing both parties' arguments, according to Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Advocate Mofizur Haque Bhuiyan. Monindro Kumar Nath, general secretary of Hindu Buddhaha Christian Unity Council, said they will move the high court for bail. "We argued in the court that if he gets bail it could create anarchy as we saw in the past that he triggered violence on the court premises by calling thousands of his supporters to protest. So, we moved against his bail plea as we believed that he could misuse his bail," public prosecutor Mofizul Haque Bhuiyan told AP. He was arrested on sedition charges for allegedly "desecrating" the Bangladesh flag brought to Chattogram where subsequent violence over his arrest left a government prosecutor dead, sparking further tensions. On December 11, the court rejected a plea seeking advanced hearing of his bail petition by lawyer Rabintra Ghose ruling that it would be heard on the previously fixed date.

'Kisan Mahapanchayat' on Saturday in Punjab, fasting farmer leader Dallewal asks supporters to join in

Agencies : Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Friday called for a 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' in Khanauri on Saturday in a video in the fight for a legal guarantee on minimum support price (MSP) for crops, reported news agency PTI. In a video message, Dallewal, who is on an indefinite hunger strike for 39 days, said that all those who support the cause, must come to the Khanauri protest site on the Punjab Haryana border, in large numbers, so he could have their "darshan" on Saturday. Section 163 of the BNS has been enforced in the Khanauri border area by the district administration, in anticipation of the Kisan Mahapanchayat, reported The Times of India. Under Section 163, gatherings of five or more people, including protests and demonstrations are banned.

Shimla Winter Carnival: Sartaj stole the show with his song 'Sajan raji ho jaaye fer bhi raula', he also sang a song for Sukhu

Diary Times Desk : Punjabi singer Satinder Sartaj made the event a hit with his brilliant performances at the cultural evening of Winter Carnival held at the historic Ridge Ground in the capital on Thursday. Sartaj made the youth dance by singing Pahadi and Punjabi songs. The enthusiasm of the audience reached its peak when he sang Udaariyan and Sajan Raaji Ho Jave Fer Bhi... When he sang the Himachali folk song Mai Ni Meriye Shimla Di Rahe Chamba Kitni Ki Door..., the entire pandal echoed with thunderous applause. Sartaj said that he has dedicated this song to the queen of mountains, Shimla. Sartaj started the program by singing Sai Ne Meri Fariyaad... After this, he sang songs like Channa Da Ghar, Masoomiyat, Beet Janiya and Heeriye Fakiriya. Satinder Sartaj's performance took the Shimla Winter Carnival to a new height. The audience thoroughly enjoyed this event and praised Sartaj's singing.



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DIARY TIMES

2

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Himachal News: Elderly woman murdered in Himachal Pradesh, accused of strangulation, son and daughter-in-law arrested

Diary Times Desk : A case of murder of an elderly migrant woman has come to light under Haripur police station. Seeing the marks on the woman's neck, it is suspected that she was strangled. After the woman's death, her son and daughter-in-law fled from the spot. Later, the police arrested them near Una. The deceased has been identified as Munni Devi (65), resident of Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. Five months ago, the accused's two younger daughters also died under suspicious circumstances. Information was received at 6:45 am on Friday about an elderly woman lying dead in a rented house in village Bandh of Panchayat Bhangwar under Police Outpost Ranital. DSP Dehra Anil Kumar reached the spot with the police team. Also, the forensic team was called to the spot and the team collected evidence. On examining the woman's body, marks of wounds were found on the neck. The police have taken the body into custody and sent it to Tanda for post-mortem. The police is investigating the case from every aspect. On Saturday, the accused will be produced in the court and taken on remand. On the other hand, DSP Dehra Anil Kumar said that the accused will be produced in the court on Saturday and will be taken on remand. The elderly woman was living with her son Nek Pal and daughter-in-law for about 20 years. In August last year, two daughters of Nek Pal, a daily wage laborer from UP, died under suspicious circumstances. According to the case, everyone ate dinner at night and went to sleep. At midnight, the health of three-year-old girl Anshika deteriorated, she started vomiting. Soon her health deteriorated and she died at home.

Kuki Protesters Clash With Security Forces In Manipur Flare-Up, Many Injured

Agencies : Protesters from the Kuki tribes clashed with central security forces in Manipur's Kangpokpi district this evening, days after the protesters tried to stop the security forces from dismantling bunkers on the hills. The protesters had been looking to stop transport as part of their economic blockade enforced to demand the withdrawal of central forces from the hills in Kangpokpi, 45 km from the state capital Imphal. When the security forces asked them to fall back, the protesters moved towards the Kangpokpi deputy commissioner's office and threw stones at the building, sources said. The security forces responded with tear gas and blanks, they said. Several protesters were injured in the attempt by the security forces to disperse the protesters, sources said. Some security personnel including the Kangpokpi SP.

Himachal Scholarship Scam: Now the money laundering case related to the scholarship scam will be investigated afresh

Diary Times Desk : There will be a fresh investigation into the money laundering case in the Rs 181 crore scholarship scam in Himachal. The Delhi headquarters of the Enforcement Directorate has handed over the responsibility of investigation to the Shimla sub-zonal deputy director and the joint director of the headquarters. Earlier, the assistant director of the Shimla office was investigating the money laundering case. He is accused of taking bribe in the case. The CBI has registered a case in this matter and the assistant director is absconding right now. After the bribe came to light, the investigation conducted by the assistant director is under question. Therefore, the ED headquarters has decided to get the case investigated afresh. The CBI has arrested the brother of the accused and another person in the bribery case. The CBI is questioning both of them. The CBI is investigating whether the assistant director has asked for money from any other companies while in office. Companies in Baddi, Barotiwala, Kala Amb are also being questioned in this regard. The problems of the operators of private educational institutions have also increased due to the new officers being entrusted with the responsibility of investigation.

Court Sentences 28 Convicts To Life Imprisonment In Kasganj Violence Case

Agencies : A special NIA court here sentenced 28 convicts to life imprisonment on Friday in connection with the Kasganj violence case. Special judge Vivekanand Sharan Tripathi also imposed a fine of Rs 80,000 on each convict. On January 2, the special NIA court here convicted 28 people in connection with the murder of Chandan Gupta, who was shot dead in a communal clash that broke out during a 2018 Tiranga Yatra in Kasganj. The accused were convicted on charges of murder, attempted murder, rioting and insulting the national flag. The case drew significant attention after Chandan Gupta's death sparked riots in the region. The court on Friday sentenced the convicts to life imprisonment. Earlier, on the quantum of sentence, the court heard the pleas of the defence as well as the prosecution, which had demanded the severest punishment for all the convicts. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) court acquitted Nasiruddin and Asim Qureshi, citing a lack of sufficient evidence to convict them.

Robert Vadra In Shimla: Robert Vadra reached Shimla, bowed his head at Jakhu temple, said – there should be no politics of religion

Diary Times Desk : Congress National General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi's husband and businessman Robert Vadra has reached Shimla. He paid obeisance at Jakhu temple. During this, businessman Robert Vadra said that "I often go to Shimla, because this is our home. It was very important for me to come to Jakhu temple and pray. I prayed for Priyanka and my children and the whole family. My prayer was for the whole country that there should be brotherhood among the people and there should be no politics of religion in the country. I am against the surveys conducted in mosques. We should be secular. We should respect everyone in our country. When people are not divided, we will move forward." On Congress' demand to name Veer Savarkar College under DU and a college after late former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Vadra said, "From 2004-2010, it was in their ears that we did not see religion in politics, we did not see people fearing or misusing agencies. Dr Manmohan Singh was highly educated and was a very good prime minister for the country. He should be remembered for economic reforms and the nuclear deal. If they plan to name a university after Dr Manmohan Singh, people will respect it." "Whenever someone asks me when I will join politics, my demand is that Priyanka should be there not only to hold rallies but also in Parliament. She will definitely raise all the important issues, including those that the BJP does not want to talk about. I am proud of her. She will bring a big change in Parliament." Congress National General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi's husband and businessman Robert Vadra paid obeisance at Jakhu temple in Shimla. During this, he said that I often go to Shimla because it is our home.

"Will Do Something About It": Supreme Court On Caste Discrimination In Colleges

Agencies : Terming it as a sensitive issue, the Supreme Court on Friday said it will devise an effective mechanism to combat caste-based discrimination in educational institutions in the country. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan directed the University Grants Commission (UGC) to notify draft regulations to ensure no caste-based discrimination happened with students in the central, state, private and deemed universities. It directed the UGC to furnish data on the number of institutions which had established equal opportunity cells in compliance with the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations) 2012, popularly called "UGC equity regulations". "We are equally conscious of this sensitive issue. We will do something. We will have to find out some effective mechanism and modalities to see that the 2012 regulations are translated into reality," the bench said. It sought Centre's response on the issue and asked the UGC to furnish data within six weeks on the complaints over such discrimination among students in all universities.



Bhunda Maha Yagya: 40 years of wait is over, Shikha Pujan was done on the roof of Bakralu Maharaj's temple amidst chanting of mantras

Diary Times Desk : Finally the moment has arrived for which thousands of people were waiting for 40 years. On the second day of Bhunda Maha Yagya of Dalgaon, on Friday, first of all, after the immersion of Ras Mandal, the phera (circumambulation) around the village and finally the Shikha Pujan ritual was completed on the roof of the historic temple of Deity Bakralu. On Saturday, the ritual of Bedha will be performed. During this, Surat Ram will cross the ditch with a 100 meter long rope of faith. This time, a crowd of thousands of people is witnessing the religious ceremony in this ritual of Bakralu temple. The whole day, Dalgaon echoed with the chants of Dev, the tunes of drums and Naati. The guests who have come from outside are staying in different tents along with Deity Bondra, Deity Mohrish and Deity Maheshwar village along with thousands of Khunds (Devlu). Before the ritual started on Friday, the worship of the deities started at around nine in the morning. After the puja was over, the Khund along with the palanquins of deity Bondra and Maheshwar reached the temple premises of the host deity Bakaralu dancing and singing. During this time, Raas Mandal was being written in the temple. Raas Mandal is written by learned Pandits as per the Vedic tradition. Till it was ready and the puja process was completed, some selected people continuously kept circumambulating around the Raas Mandal. While writing the mandal, if anyone tries to break it, it is considered a hindrance in the ritual. After the worship of Raas Mandal, deity Bondra and deity Maheshwar broke it by touching it with their heads. Parshuram deity Khashkandi, Gumma and Andrevathi also participated in this ritual.

Himachal News: CBI arrested senior TRAI official, had demanded bribe of Rs 1 lakh, caught red handed

Diary Times Desk : The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) senior research officer Narendra Singh Rawat in Delhi while accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh. This officer had demanded money from a cable operator of Himachal's Sirmour district for renewal of license. The cable operator had complained to Shimla CBI. After this, the CBI team laid a trap to catch the TRAI officer. A team led by CBI Superintendent of Police Rajesh Chahal was sent to Delhi to catch the accused red handed with the bribe. On Thursday, the team arrested the officer with the bribe. The accused was brought to Shimla in the evening itself. On Friday, the accused was presented in the CBI court at Chakkar, from where he has been sent on police remand till January 6. It is being told that the accused officer recommends to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Himachal Weather: Shimla was the hottest in 2025 after 2006, this much maximum temperature was recorded today

Diary Times Desk : The record of heat in January has been broken in the capital Shimla. Shimla recorded the hottest day in history on Friday. The maximum temperature in the city on Friday was 22 degrees Celsius. Earlier in the year 2006, the temperature was 21.4 degrees on January 30. The Hill Queen Shimla is experiencing the heat of October in January. On Thursday night, the highest minimum temperature was also recorded in Shimla city after 16 years. The tourist city Manali also recorded the highest temperature at night after 16 years. The temperature of the hilly areas of the state, Dalhousie, Kufri, Kasauli has also increased. The hill stations of the state are experiencing more heat these days than the plain districts. The weather remains cool due to fog.

Himachal News: HRTC bus and car collide at Dadhol Chowk, scooter rider hit; Both injured referred to hospital

Diary Times Desk : A bus of Path Parivahan Nigam and a car collided at Dadhol Chowk on Shimla-Mator National Highway under Bharari police station area. In this collision, a scooty passing by also got hit, and two youths riding on the scooty got injured. Immediately after the accident, the local people took the injured to the nearest health center, where after first aid, both were referred to Ghumarwin Hospital. The accident happened at around 2 o'clock on Friday afternoon. According to the information, the car was going from Ghumarwin towards Lethvi. When he reached Dadhol Chowk and started turning towards Lethvi from the intersection, at the same time a scooty was coming from Dangar. The car driver applied the brake, but in the meantime the Jhakhdi-Hamirpur bus coming from Ghumarwin hit the car from behind. After this collision, the car directly collided with the scooty. Both the youths riding on the scooty got badly stuck between the car and the scooty. Local shopkeepers and other people immediately reached the spot and took the injured youths to the hospital.

Himachal Cabinet Meeting: First meeting of the new year of Himachal Cabinet on 8th, know what can be discussed

Diary Times Desk : A meeting of the State Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has been called at the State Secretariat on January 8. Many important decisions will be taken in this meeting. CM Sukhu can discuss the preparations for the next budget in this meeting. This will be the first meeting of the State Cabinet in the new year. Two-day meetings chaired by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu will be held at the State Secretariat on February 3 and 4 to determine the priorities of the MLAs in the annual budget. The meetings will also discuss the suggestions received from the MLAs regarding austerity measures, raising financial resources and better administration for 2025-26. On February 3, a meeting will be held with the MLAs of Kangra, Kinnaur and Kullu from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm and Solan, Chamba, Bilaspur and Lahaul Spiti districts from 2 pm to 5 pm. On February 4, a meeting will be held with the MLAs of Shimla and Mandi districts from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm and with the MLAs.

Himachal News: High Court said- permanent appointments are needed in a hilly state like Himachal

Diary Times Desk : Himachal High Court, while commenting on the petition filed to lift the ban on outsourced recruitments, said that permanent appointments are needed in a hilly state like Himachal. A division bench of Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia and Justice Satyen Vaidya asked the government where is the blueprint for permanent appointments. The court said that if something untoward happens while working with a temporary or contract employee, then who will be responsible. If the government has advertised posts for permanent appointment of nurses, then inform the court about it. The next hearing in the case will be on January 8. An application was filed in the court on behalf of the government that there is an urgent need for nurses in the health department. The health department cannot function without nurses. The Himachal government has issued advertisements for the recruitment of 28 posts of nurses under the Rural Health Mission of the Government of India. The Advocate General said that in compliance with the court's orders, a committee has been formed by the government for the process of outsourced recruitments.

Himachal Pradesh: Policeman arrested with chitta in Himachal Pradesh, was providing services in Shimla

Diary Times Desk : In Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh, the police took strict action against drug abuse and recovered 6.64 grams of chitta (heroin) from truck number HP24C-4303 in Bagi Binola. Two people, including a policeman, have been arrested in this case, and the truck has also been seized. The incident took place on Thursday late night around 12:30, when IO Sandeep Kumar of Sadar police station was patrolling and blockading with his team. During this time, while checking the truck in Binola, two persons, Kuldeep Kumar (35) and Vishal Thakur (32), both residents of Binola, were arrested. SP Sandeep Dhawal confirmed the case and said that the arrested policeman was earlier posted in Vigilance Bilaspur and was currently serving as a driver.

'Moment of silence for freebies': Karnataka government's 15% bus fare hike sparks outrage

Agencies : The Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka government's most recent 15 per cent increase in bus fares has sparked a range of reactions, with many questioning the timing and fairness of the move. The hike, which comes after the Congress-led government promised free bus rides for women, has raised concerns about the balancing act between public welfare and financial sustainability. The Karnataka cabinet on Thursday decided to increase the bus fares in the state-owned transport corporations by 15 per cent. The decision was taken in view of the substantial hike in operational costs such as increase in spending on fuel prices and staff, Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said. The opposition BJP lashed out at the Congress government in the state over its decision to hike bus fares.

'Extreme torture': Delhi man made a video hours before suicide

Agencies : The 40-year-old Model Town man, who allegedly died by suicide earlier this week, had recorded an hour-long video on his phone before his death, in which he accused his wife and in-laws of "extreme" torture, police said on Thursday. Meanwhile, another CCTV footage of the man arguing with his father-in-law has surfaced online. The Delhi Police on Thursday said they are probing the videos as well as the police complaint filed by the man's family against his wife and in-laws for alleged torture and harassment. In the 59-minute video recorded on Tuesday, accessed by HT, the man is purportedly heard saying, "I am about to commit suicide because I was extremely tortured by my in-laws...my wife. We had already filed for mutual divorce on certain terms and conditions... we have signed on some conditions in court. We have to fulfil those conditions within the period of 180 days. But my in-laws and my wife are pressuring me with a new set of conditions which are beyond my scope...They are asking for another ₹10 lakh which I don't have the capacity to pay. I cannot ask my parents as they already have paid enough." HT tried to reach out to the wife and her father over the phone but they didn't respond to calls and messages. According to the police, the deceased, who previously co-owned a popular cafe in GTB Nagar and ran a bakery on GT Karnal Road.

India Protests China's New "Counties", Parts Of Which Are In Ladakh



Agencies : India has conveyed its objection and protest via diplomatic channels to China after the neighbouring country set up two counties, parts of which come under the Union Territory Ladakh, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said today. Chinese state media Xinhua on December 27 reported the government of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region announced the establishment of two new counties in the region - He'an County, and Hekang County. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and the State Council approved the two new counties, which will be administered by Hotan Prefecture, Xinhua reported. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said parts of the "so-called counties" fall under Ladakh, and India "never accepted illegal Chinese occupation of Indian territory in this area". "We have seen the announcement pertaining to the establishment of two new counties in Hotan Prefecture of China. Parts of jurisdiction of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory of Ladakh.

India trashes Washington Post report linking New Delhi to anti-Muizzu plot

Agencies : India on Friday strongly trashed two recent reports published by the Washington Post one linking New Delhi to a failed plot to impeach Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu and another on Indian agents allegedly attempting to eliminate certain terror elements in Pakistan. Dismissing the reports, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the newspaper and the reporter in question appear to nurse a "compulsive hostility" towards India. In its report on the Maldives, the Post, citing a document titled "Democratic Renewal Initiative", claimed that opposition politicians.

India's Rural Poverty Down To 4.86% From 25.7% In 12 Years: SBI Report

Agencies : India's rural poverty ratio has registered a dramatic decline to 4.86 per cent in the financial year 2023-24 from 25.7 per cent in 2011-12 while urban poverty has fallen to 4.09 per cent from 4.6 per cent during this period, according to an SBI Research report released on Friday. "At an aggregate level, we believe poverty rates in India could now be in the range of 4 per cent-4.5 per cent with almost minimal existence of extreme poverty," the report said. "The sharp decline in the rural poverty.

Stricter Pollution Curbs Under GRAP 3 Reimposed In Delhi

Agencies : With air quality worsening again, stricter pollution curbs under GRAP 3 were reimposed in Delhi and surrounding areas, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CQAM), the Centre's pollution watchdog, said on Friday. The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a set of emergency measures implemented in Delhi-NCR to tackle air pollution based on the severity of the Air Quality Index (AQI). The Supreme Court had earlier directed that GRAP's Stage III measures must be implemented if the AQI exceeds 350 and Stage IV measures reintroduced if it surpasses 400. Stage III and Stage IV were activated on December 16 after AQI levels hit 401. The GRAP for Delhi-NCR is divided into four stages of air quality -- Stage 1 for "poor" Air Quality Index (AQI) ranging between 201 and 300, Stage 2 for "very poor" AQI of 301-400, Stage 3 for "severe" AQI of 401-450 and Stage 4 for "severe plus" AQI (more than 450).

Akhand Path in memory of Manmohan Singh; leaders pay tribute

Agencies : Leaders from across the political spectrum paid their tributes to former prime minister Manmohan Singh at a prayer meeting on Friday. The 'Shabad Kirtan and Antim Ardas' of Dr Singh has been organised at the Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib. Before the prayer meet, the family of the former PM would also hold a 'bhog' of the 'Akhand Path' kept in the memory of Singh at their 3, Motilal Nehru Marg residence. Singh, who steered the country as prime minister from 2004 to 2014, was considered the architect of India's economic reforms in the 1990s.

2 Men Set Themselves On Fire To Protest Disposal Of Union Carbide Waste

Agencies : Two men set themselves ablaze in Madhya Pradesh's Pithampur on Friday during a protest against the disposal of hazardous waste from Bhopal's Union Carbide factory. The men suffered burn injuries and have been hospitalised. Over 300 tonnes of the hazardous waste had been stored in the factory since the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 and had been moved in 12 containers to Pithampur in Dhar district for scientific disposal on Wednesday. Residents, under the banner of 'Pithampur Bachao Samiti', had called a bandh on Friday to protest against the planned incineration of the waste which, they claimed, would harm the local people and environment. During the bandh, which saw shops and markets remaining closed in the town, the two men - aged around 40 - poured an inflammable liquid on their bodies and set themselves ablaze, witnesses said. Police also carried out a lathicharge to disperse some protesters after they blocked a key road. Pithampur has a population of about 1.75 lakh and its industrial area has nearly 700 factories.



How 120 Elite Israeli Forces Raided Syria, Destroyed Missile Plant In 3 Hours

Agencies : The Israeli Air Force (IAF) on Thursday declassified details of a high-stakes operation in which 120 Israeli commandos raided and destroyed an alleged underground Iran-funded missile manufacturing facility in Syria. The mission, codenamed "Operation Many Ways," was carried out on September 8 in 2024. The facility, known as "Deep Layer," was allegedly located near the Masyaf area in western Syria, a region considered a stronghold of Syrian air defences. Israeli officials claimed that the site, a flagship project of Iran's missile production program, was intended to supply precision missiles to Hezbollah in Lebanon and to the Assad regime in Syria. The operation was carried out without injuries to the Israeli forces, the officials claim. According to the IAF, Iran's construction of the Deep Layer facility began in late 2017, following an earlier Israeli airstrike on an aboveground rocket engine manufacturing site at the Scientific Studies and Research Center (CERS) in Jamraya, southern Syria. This attack led Iran to shift its operations underground, aiming to safeguard its missile production capabilities from future airstrikes. By 2021, the underground facility, buried 70 to 130 metres into a mountain, had become operational, with missile production capabilities nearing full scale.

Israeli Negotiators To Resume Doha Hostage Talks, Says Netanyahu's Office

Agencies : Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Thursday authorised Israeli negotiators to continue talks in Doha to secure a hostage release deal, his office said, after Israel and Hamas traded accusations recently over delaying a deal. "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has approved the professional-level delegation of the Mossad (spy agency), the IDF (military) and the ISA (internal security agency) to continue the negotiations in Doha," a statement from his office said, referring to indirect talks brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the United States.

Influential US politician says Elon Musk hiring cheaper tech servants from India with H1B visa

Agencies : US Senator Bernie Sanders has voiced strong criticism against Elon Musk, accusing the tech billionaire of exploiting the H-1B visa system to hire lower-wage foreign workers like Indians rather than employing highly skilled American labour. Sanders' statement comes amid a heated debate over using the H-1B visa program, which allows US companies to hire skilled workers from abroad. In a statement released on Thursday, Sanders, a long-time advocate for workers' rights, said Musk's support for the H-1B visa program is not about filling a talent gap but rather about reducing labour costs. The influential US politician also argued that major companies like Tesla are using the program to replace well-paying American jobs with cheaper labour from countries like India. He added that this undermines local workers and benefits billionaires.

Jill Biden's most expensive gift in 2023, a \$20,000 diamond from PM Modi



Agencies : Among the countless gifts US President Joe Biden and his family received from foreign leaders in 2023 is a whopping \$20,000 diamond, the single most expensive present which first lady Jill Biden got from Indian prime minister Narendra Modi. According to the annual accounting report recently published by the State Department, the 7.5-carat diamond turned out to be the most expensive item gifted to any member of the first family in 2023, The Associated Press reported. While the big stone stood out, it wasn't the only gift Jill received. She also got a brooch worth \$14,063 from the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States and a bracelet, brooch and photo album worth \$4,510 from the president and first lady of Egypt.

South Korea Investigators In Standoff To Arrest Impeached President Yoon

Agencies : South Korean investigators sought to arrest impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol at his residence Friday over a failed martial law bid, but local media reported security forces were blocking their attempts. Yoon, who has already been suspended from duty by lawmakers, would become the first sitting president in South Korean history to be arrested if the warrant is carried out. The president, who issued a bungled declaration on December 3 that shook the vibrant East Asian democracy and briefly lurched it back to the dark days of military rule, faces imprisonment or, at worst, the death penalty. The execution of the arrest warrant for President Yoon Suk Yeol has begun," said the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO), which is probing Yoon's short-lived declaration of martial law, with its officials and police seen entering the president's residence. CIO investigators including senior prosecutor Lee Dae-hwan were let through heavy security barricades to enter the residence to attempt.

Pakistan PM's 'crush Taliban' message amid border tensions with Afghanistan

Agencies : In a resolute address to the Special Investment Facilitation Council's (SIFC) apex committee in Islamabad, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif gave a stern warning to the Taliban, declaring that the militant group must be "crushed" to ensure the nation's progress. His strong remarks come against a backdrop of escalating violence along the volatile Pakistan-Afghanistan border. "The Taliban has resurfaced, and we cannot move forward without crushing this menace," Sharif said, acknowledging the mounting toll of terrorism on Pakistan's stability. Paying tribute to the sacrifices of Pakistani soldiers and law enforcement officers, he said, "Every day, there is a new incident. Whether it is 10 officers, 5, or members of the Frontier Corps, police, or the Army, their martyrdom represents the ultimate sacrifice. We must honour them and convey to the nation that defeating this monster is our shared target. Sharif's call for unity underscored the gravity of the situation, as he emphasised the need for political and military stakeholders to work together. "We must come together on one page to defeat this threat and secure the nation's future," he urged.

Carter's Panama Canal Treaties Symbolize How Much Washington Has Changed

Agencies : When President Jimmy Carter traveled to Panama in June 1978 to finalize hotly disputed treaties turning over the Panama Canal, he declared that "we stand on the threshold of a new era." More than 46 years later, that era may be over, if President-elect Donald J. Trump has his way. Mr. Carter always considered the twin treaties to be signature achievements that would figure prominently in his obituary. Indeed, for all the fireworks they generated at the time, the canal treaties have been broadly accepted ever since as a settled matter and the bedrock of the U.S. relationship with Latin America. Yet paradoxically, just days before Mr. Carter's death at age 100 on Sunday, Mr. Trump seemingly out of the blue propelled the nearly half-century-old issue back onto the national agenda, complaining about shipping fees and Chinese influence. If Panama does not make changes, he said, "we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to the United States of America, in full, quickly and without question."



Congress set for revamp ahead of 2027 Punjab poll



Agencies : The Congress is set to overhaul its state unit in coming days with an eye on the 2027 Punjab Assembly polls. Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC) chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring said the party will soon constitute a committee to propose names before sending them for approval to its highest-decision making body — All-India Congress Committee (AICC). “The appointments would go a long way in strengthening the state unit in the run-up to the Assembly elections,” said Warring. The state unit was reconstituted two years ago, with Warring given the charge of the Punjab chief after the party’s poor show in the 2022 Assembly elections, in which the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) dislodged the Congress, winning 92 of the 117 seats. The Congress tally was reduced to just 18 from 77 seats it won in the 2017 state elections under the leadership of former Punjab Chief Minister and senior party leader Amarinder Singh, ending the 10-year rule of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). After his ouster as the Punjab Chief Minister, the senior leader had quit the party and launched his own political outfit before the 2022 polls, which he merged with the BJP later that year.

Chandiagrh mayoral elections by month-end: DC

Agencies : Putting all speculations to rest, the UT Administration on Thursday decided to hold elections to the posts of Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Municipal Corporation (MC) in the last week of this month. Deputy Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav said the elections would be held in the month-end, most probably after January 26 as per the Municipal Corporation Act. He, however, said the date for the elections would be finalised early next week. Incumbent Mayor Kuldeep Kumar’s tenure will end on February 19. Earlier during the day, a delegation of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) met Yadav and urged him to hold the elections on February 19, when the incumbent Mayor’s term is scheduled to end. The delegation also demanded that the election be held by show of hands instead of secret ballot. The delegation comprised AAP city president DSP Vijay Pal, Mayor Kumar and senior leader Dr Harmeet Singh.

2002 murder: SC asks Sirsa Dera chief, others to respond to CBI plea against their acquittal

Agencies : The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and four others on the CBI’s petition challenging a Punjab and Haryana High Court order acquitting them in the 2002 murder of manager Ranjit Singh. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna asked them to respond to the CBI’s petition challenging the May 28, 2024, order of the High Court acquitting them of the murder of Dera Sacha Sauda’s former manager Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh was shot dead by four unknown persons for allegedly circulating an anonymous letter highlighting alleged sexual exploitation of female followers of the sect in 2002. The CJ said the case will be heard by a Bench led Justice Bela Trivedi which was already seized of an appeal filed by the complainant in this case. In September last year Justice Trivedi’s Bench had agreed.

NHA still short of land for 15 highway projects in state

Agencies : The National Highways Authority of India (NHA) is still short of land for 103-km stretches to complete 15 highway projects covering 604 km in the state. The work on three small parcels of its flagship Delhi-Amritsar-Katra (DAK) expressway is also stalled due to stiff resistance by farmers even after handing over the entire land for the same. The autonomous agency under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has sought administrative and police assistance from the state government to get the parcels of remaining land for 15 projects and execute work on the three stretches of the DAK expressway. However, the work to construct 22 highways spanning 740 km was in full swing after getting the requisite land. The NHA has been implementing 37 projects with aggregate length of 1,344 km in Punjab, most of which had remained stalled for long due to want of land and farmers’ protest before getting back on track after Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari threatened to cancel/withdraw projects if the state government failed to provide requisite land acquired for the same.

Thick fog in Chandigarh; piercing cold prevails in Haryana, Punjab

Agencies : Chandigarh woke up to a thick blanket of fog on Friday, with temperatures dropping to a minimum of 6 degrees Celsius. Visibility conditions worsened significantly. Relief, however, appears to be on the horizon as the IMD predicts a slight increase in temperatures over the coming days due to the influence of a fresh western disturbance. Haryana and Punjab continued to be in the grip of severe cold, with maximum temperatures hovering well below normal limits in the two states. Fog also reduced visibility early in the morning at some places in the two states. In Haryana, severe cold prevailed during the day at most places. In Punjab, cold wave swept Mohali and Amritsar, which recorded respective maximums of 10.7 degrees Celsius and 11 degrees Celsius. Ludhiana also shivered under biting cold during the day registering a high of 12 degrees Celsius while Patiala also braved the chill, recording a high of 14 degrees Celsius. Delhi’s air quality deteriorated further, recording an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 318 in the “very poor” category, as the Central Pollution Control Board resumed data updates after a day-long pause. Flights that lack the necessary equipment for low-visibility landings, especially those not adhering to CAT III standards.

SC slams ED’s ‘high-handedness’, upholds arrest of ex-Haryana Congress MLA illegal

Agencies : The Supreme Court has observed ED’s “high-handedness” and “inhuman conduct” during an almost 15-hour-long interrogation of former Haryana Congress MLA Surender Panwar and upheld an order saying his arrest was illegal. A Bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih said it was an “inhuman conduct” on part of ED officers as the case was not related to some terror activity but of an alleged illegal sand mining. “This is not the way to treat people in such a case. You have virtually forced a person to make a statement,” it said. Dismissing the Enforcement Directorate (ED)’s plea against the high court order, the Bench held, “We are not inclined to interfere with the finding of the high court that the arrest of the respondent was illegal.” The high court’s findings, it said, were only for deciding whether Panwar’s arrest was illegal.

Rohtak varsity establishes special cell to clear medical bills

Agencies : Keeping in view the huge pendency of medical bills, Pt Bhagwat Dayal Sharma University of Health Sciences (UHS) authorities have established a Medical Reimbursement Cell exclusively to deal with such cases promptly. Significantly, it has also introduced an online system to submit the bills to ensure their timely disposal. A three-week deadline for clearing such bills has also been set with the fixing of accountability of officials concerned. As per sources, over 400 cases pertaining to medical reimbursement have been lying pending for the past several months while the beneficiaries, including superannuated employees, are compelled either to take round of the university or to approach officials over phone to get them cleared. “The move will bring relief to superannuation and working employees of the UHS and the PGIMS-Rohtak as the cell will facilitate timely reimbursement of their medical bills. The cell had to be set up while acting on the complaints about inordinate delay in the reimbursement of medical bills,” said Dr HK Aggarwal, UHS Vice Chancellor. He informed that superannuated employees of the UHS and the PGIMS had been residing in different districts of the state. Now, they need not to visit the UHS for the reimbursement of their bills, he added. Their bills would be reimbursed automatically within the deadline of three weeks.

Scam unearthed in Shimla's Theog; on papers, tankers fetched water with govt cars, bikes number

Diary Times Desk : All India Congress Committee spokesperson and Theog MLA Kuldeep Singh Rathore has asked the state government to expedite the investigation into an alleged water supply scam in his constituency and take strict action against those found guilty. The alleged scam was unearthed by former Theog MLA Rakesh Singha, who on the basis of RTI information, has alleged serious irregularities in water supply in the area last summer. Singha has alleged that the registration number of vehicles used for water supply turned out to be those of motorcycles, cars, including a vehicle belonging to a senior government official, instead of water tankers. Additionally, water supply through tankers has been shown for two villages that lack approach roads. "Every year, around Rs 10 to 12 lakh are spent to provide water supply to the people in Theog via tankers. The amount reached Rs 1.13 crore in 2024," said Singha, alleging a scam.

TRAI officer in CBI net for demanding bribe from cable operators in Himachal

Diary Times Desk : The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a senior research officer from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh from Himachal Pradesh's Sirmour-based cable operators on Friday. According to the CBI, it registered a case on the complaint of a cable operator who alleged that the accused TRAI officer was demanding Rs 1 lakh bribe. "The complainant is a licence holder of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for running cable services in Sirmour district," an officer said. The complaint was filed on behalf of five other cable operators, alleging that the accused officer was favouring them by improperly assessing their regulatory documents — the Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports (Q-PMRs) — and withholding recommendations to cancel their licenses. As per the TRAI guidelines, cable operators must submit their Q-PMRs to the officer, who after assessment or perusal, accepts or recommends cancellation of their licenses if some discrepancies are found.

Lahaul and Spiti Police issue travel advisory due to hazardous road conditions



Diary Times Desk : The Lahaul and Spiti Police have issued a safety advisory for travellers using the Sansari-Killar-Thirot-Tandi (SKTT) road, particularly near Kadu Nala, about 84 km from Lahaul. The road has become increasingly hazardous due to continuous sliding and shooting stones, posing a significant risk to vehicles and pedestrians. In light of the ongoing danger, the police have strongly advised travellers heading towards Killar from the Lahaul side to avoid unnecessary travel after 5 pm. This is because the risk of stone slides and landslides increases after sunset, making it difficult to detect potential hazards in the dark. The SKTT road is crucial for connecting Lahaul with remote areas of Killar and beyond in Chamba district. However, it has been prone to landslides and other natural disturbances, especially during winter months. Authorities are closely monitoring the situation and have urged people to plan their travel during daylight hours when visibility is better.

Police constable arrested, another in custody for killing hotel manager in Himachal's Chamba

Diary Times Desk : A police constable was arrested and another placed under custody for allegedly killing a hotel manager at a New Year's party in Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district, officials said on Friday. The accused, Anoop Kumar and Amit Kumar, were posted as constables in the Chamba district, while the victim was identified as hotel manager Rajinder Kumar. According to police, the incident occurred during a New Year's party when three police personnel visited a hotel in Banikhet, Chamba. Anoop and Amit got into a heated argument with Rajinder and Sachin, a hotel employee. In the heat of the moment, Rajinder, Anoop and Sachin fell from the hotel's elevated parking space and suffered injuries. While Anoop and Sachin suffered fractures, Rajinder Kumar succumbed to injuries. Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhishek Yadav said that Amit had been arrested while Anoop will be formally placed under arrest after getting discharged from the hospital. The involvement of the third police personnel is under investigation. Rajinder's family members earlier held a protest and demanded action against the accused.

Women from Himachal with skills at 'Him Mahotsav' hope Delhi's cold picks up their clientele

Diary Times Desk : Colourful fabrics laced with intricate designs, bright stone-studded jewellery, handmade paintings that sooth a person, fragrance of organic jams and jellies and mouth-watering cuisine of hills. For a moment, a person gets a feel of Himalayas in Delhi. It's all at Delhi Haat where Himachal Pradesh government has organised an exhibition 'Him Mahotsav'—a platform for region's entrepreneurs to showcase their crafts and products. Above all at most of the stalls at Him Mahotsav are being run by women from hills, whose resilience and composure reflects in their products they sell at the exhibition. Their brightly lit faces tell the story to how they are keeping alive the traditional crafts and products from hills. 26-year-old Ranjana Sandhu, an entrepreneur is selling paintings which are no ordinary, but Mandala art. She claims these paintings can be a great stress buster for a person. There is also Kirandeep Kaur, 33, who sells wooden artifacts made from reclaimed wood. "We don't cut trees to make this. We don't harm environment," she said.

School dropout rate in Himachal Pradesh amongst lowest in country

Diary Times Desk : Himachal has lowest school dropout rate among all states in the country. As per the UDISE Plus 2023-24 report released by the Ministry of Education, the state has zero dropout rate in primary section, 0.6 in upper primary section and 4.9 in the secondary section. The dropout rate is much lower than the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana most states in the country. The state has Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) of 14, better than most states. The lower PTR means teachers are able to develop healthy one-on-one mentoring and is able to offer insight and help that would be impossible in a larger classroom. The New Education Policy recommends a PTR of 30:1 at all levels of school education system. Meanwhile, the average enrolment per school continues to be among the lowest in the country. The average enrolment per school is just 80, and only Mizoram, Meghalaya and Ladakh have lower enrolment numbers. In view of the enrolment, the government has shut down or merged around 1,100 schools over the last two years. It will result in higher average enrolment over due course of time. As per the report, 3,473 schools have just one teacher. To address the issue, the government has deputed staff that has been freed up after closing or merger of schools.



Rohit Sharma Told He's Not In BCCI's Test Plans, Meeting With Virat Kohli Soon: Report

Agencies : The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has informed Rohit Sharma that he is no longer a part of their plans for Test cricket after the ongoing series against Australia, according to a report by the Indian Express. India have a tough road ahead when it comes to qualifying for the World Test Championship (WTC) Final and the report claims that if India manage to reach the summit clash, they will be captained by Jasprit Bumrah. The report further claimed that the BCCI selectors will have a meeting with Virat Kohli to discuss his future in Test cricket. However, it is believed that all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja remain in the scheme of things for the future as his presence is valued by BCCI in the transition period. With speculations suggesting that Rohit Sharma has played his last Test match for the Indian national team, and the skipper having 'opted to rest' in the fifth and final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, wicket-keeper batter Rishabh Pant labelled the move as an 'emotional decision.' "It was an emotional decision because he's been the captain for a long time. We see him as the leader of the team. There are some decisions that you are not involved with.



Short TAKES

"At Toss, Jasprit Bumrah Mentioned...": Ravi Shastri Drops Big Rohit Sharma Retirement Hint

Agencies : Former India cricketers Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri feel that the Boxing Day Test might have been Rohit Sharma's final appearance in Test cricket, following his bold call to rest himself for the series finale that began here on Friday. The 37-year-old chose to sit out with the series on the line, having scored only 31 runs in five innings across three Tests. "I think it probably means that (if) India don't qualify for the WTC final, the Melbourne Test will be Rohit Sharma's last game," Gavaskar said during the lunch break on day one. "The WTC cycle will start with the England series, and the selectors would likely want someone available for the 2027 final. Whether India gets there or not is another matter, but that's is what the selection committee is likely to do. "We have probably seen Rohit Sharma for the last time in Test cricket," he added.

'Rested' Rohit Sharma's Reaction As Virat Kohli Survives First-Ball Duck Is All Of Us

Agencies : Star India batter Virat Kohli survived a first-ball duck on Day 1 of the series-deciding Sydney Test against Australia on Friday. The incident happened in the 8th over of India's innings after Kohli walked out to bat, following Yashasvi Jaiswal's dismissal. After Jaiswal, Kohli too was caught in the slip cordon off Scott Boland's delivery. Boland bowled a length ball, inducing an edge from Kohli's bat that flew to Steve Smith at second slip. However, Smith scooped it up but the ball seemed to have touched the grass before it was taken by Marnus Labuschagne at gully. The on-field umpire immediately went upstairs, to the third umpire, Joel Wilson who had a good look from all the camera angles and gave his decision in favour of the struggling India batter. India captain Rohit Sharma, who decided to rest himself from the match, had a worried look on his face and he got out of seat to have a good look at the incident. Kohli eventually dismissed by the same bowler early in the second session when he was batting on 17 except for an unbeaten 100 in the first Test at Perth, the Aussies have managed to keep Virat quiet as he has managed just 26 runs in his other four innings, including three single-digit scores.

Boland takes four as India fold for 185 after batting on green top

Agencies : India's restraint-filled batting approach did not pay dividends as they were bowled out for 185 after opting to bat on a green-top in Sydney. Scott Boland was the most successful of the Australian bowlers picking up figures of 4-31 with his metronomic lines and lengths accentuated by the seam movement that the surface had on offer. India had their moment in the sun when Jasprit Bumrah got Usman Khawaja (for the sixth time in the series) nicking behind after verbal exchange with non-striker Sam Konstas. The dramatic end gave India some joy on an otherwise tough day out with the bat. There were testing questions to be asked of India right from the start when Bumrah walked out for the toss instead of Rohit Sharma. The pacer, who had led India in Perth, mentioned that Rohit had "opted to rest" for this match, and proceeded to put his batters up for tough questioning. KL Rahul, who moved back to the top in Rohit's absence, began watchfully along with Yashasvi Jaiswal as the conditions demanded and remained tight in defence and in the corridor outside off to begin with. But against the run of play, Rahul flicked a legstump half-volley from Mitchell Starc straight into the hands of square leg, pushing India behind.

Bumrah vs Konstas continues to enliven Border-Gavaskar Trophy

Agencies : Sam Konstas was at the centre of a fiery exchange with India's stand-in captain Jasprit Bumrah amid a dramatic finish to the opening day of the final Test at the SCG, which has set up another compelling duel when play resumes on Saturday. Australia's reply started with just 15 minutes of the day remaining, and first ball Konstas walked down the crease at Bumrah and whipped him through midwicket. Konstas then exchanged words with Bumrah before what became the penultimate ball of the day after Usman Khawaja had pulled away from the strike, seemingly to try and eat up time to ensure there wouldn't be another over. Konstas turned to Bumrah and appeared to say something, which prompted umpire Sharfuddoula to step in. The next delivery passed through outside off stump. Then, with the final ball of the day, Bumrah had Khawaja edging to second slip, and immediately turned and locked eyes with Konstas at the non-striker's end and took a couple of steps towards him, before being joined by several team-mates, including Virat Kohli, in exuberant celebration. "I feel they had a little chit-chat," Rishabh Pant said of the exchange. "They wanted to waste some time.

Hardik Pandya To Lead India In Champions Trophy? Report Makes Shocking Claim

Agencies : India skipper Rohit Sharma's decision to skip the fifth Test against Australia in Sydney raised many questions on his future in the longest format. In the final match of the five-match series, star Jasprit Bumrah was named as the stand-in skipper of India. Earlier in the opening Test in Perth, India won by 10 wickets under the captaincy of Bumrah. In the ongoing series, Rohit struggled to get runs as he scored only 31 runs in five innings. As there no certainty regarding his future in Tests, a new report also suggested Rohit's captaincy snub from the upcoming Champions Trophy. A sources told MyKhel that the team management is currently looking at Hardik Pandya as India's captain for the Champions Trophy, which will kick-start from February 19. "Hardik has the knack for leading in high-pressure situations, and his experience as an all-rounder and leader makes him an ideal choice for an ICC tournament like the Champions Trophy," a source told MyKhel.

