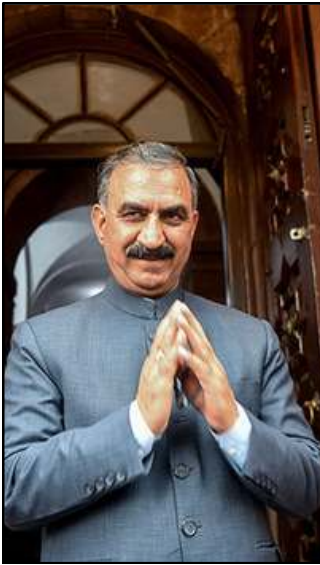


## HP Cabinet Decisions: Criteria for BPL will change, tree cutting will be banned; Know major decisions of the cabinet



**Diary Times Desk :** The meeting of the Himachal Pradesh Cabinet was held in Shimla on Thursday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. Many important decisions were taken in the meeting. The Cabinet paid emotional tribute to former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and observed two minutes silence in his memory. The Cabinet appreciated his important contribution in the development of the country and Himachal Pradesh. Due to the far-sighted thinking and cooperation of Dr. Manmohan Singh, many important projects have been successfully implemented in the state, which include Atal Tunnel, three medical colleges, ESIC Hospital in Nerchowk, IIT Mandi, IIIT Una, Central University in Kangra and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT). The Cabinet approved to rename Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration HIPA as Dr. Manmohan Singh Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration. Cabinet ministers Jagat Singh Negi and Yadavindra Goma gave information about the decisions of the Cabinet. Negi said that a survey will be conducted again in April for the selection of BPL eligible persons. The quota of 2.82 lakh fixed by the Center for BPL will remain the same, but its criteria will be changed. Said that it has been decided to make the income for BPL Rs 1.50 lakh. The Cabinet approved the inclusion of those families in the BPL list which do not have any adult member between the ages of 18 and 59 years.

## GenomeIndia project complete, PM Modi calls it historic

**Agencies :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the successful completion of the GenomeIndia Project, calling it a historic step in India's research landscape. The GenomeIndia Project, which started in January 2020, is a national initiative to map the genetic diversity of India's population. It can help advance the treatment of genetic and infectious diseases. The researchers and scientists from over 20 institutions found over 135 million genetic differences, mainly consisting of small changes in a single DNA unit (called single nucleotide polymorphisms or SNVs) and tiny additions or deletions in the DNA sequence (known as INDELS).

## "No Error": Top Court Rejects Pleas On Review Of Same-Sex Marriage Verdict

**Agencies :** Noting that there was no "error apparent" and no "interference is warranted", the Supreme Court has dismissed petitions seeking a review of its October 2023 judgment in which it refused to grant legal sanction to same-sex marriage. Having refused an open hearing on the petitions earlier, a bench of Justices BR Gavai, Surya Kant, BV Nagarathna, PS Narasimha and Dipankar Datta considered the petitions in chambers and said that it had gone through the judgments of Justice Ravindra Bhat (speaking for himself and Justice Hima Kohli), and Justice PS Narasimha - which constituted the majority - and found no error in them. "We have carefully gone through the judgments delivered by Hon'ble Mr. S. Ravindra Bhat (Former Judge) speaking for himself and for Hon'ble Ms Justice Hima Kohli (Former Judge) as well as the concurring opinion expressed by one of us (Hon'ble Mr Justice Pamidighantam Sri Narasimha), constituting majority view. We do not find any error apparent on the face of the record," the bench said. "We further find that the view expressed in both the judgments is in accordance.



## 'Wind up alliance': Omar Abdullah on Tejashwi Yadav's 'INDIA bloc limited to 2024 polls' remark

**Agencies :** Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday reacted to Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav's claims that the INDIA bloc was limited to Lok Sabha elections. On Wednesday, Tejashwi Yadav when asked about AAP and Congress contesting the Delhi polls alone had said, "It is not unusual. In Lok Sabha election the main motto was to defeat BJP in election and the alliance of INDIA bloc was limited upto that motto. In such a situation, it is not unnatural for the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party to have conflicts." When asked about Yadav's remark, Abdullah said, "I cannot say anything, because we have nothing to do with the Delhi elections. The Congress, Aam Aadmi Party and other political parties on the ground should decide how can they effectively fight against the BJP.

## "Small Minds Driven By Petty Politics": KTR Appears For Questioning In Formula E Case

**Agencies :** BRS working president KT Rama Rao, popularly known by his initials KTR, has appeared for questioning in the Formula E race case, with a stern message that he has all the answers. Mr Rao, who was summoned by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) today, is the prime accused in the case related to the alleged "unauthorised" payments to conduct the Formula E race. The Telangana High Court has allowed KTR's lawyer to accompany him to the ACB office, but he is not allowed in the interrogation room. He can track the questioning from across a glass window in an adjacent room. CCTV recording is not allowed for the questioning session. Ahead of appearing before the ACB, KTR said whatever he did was to improve Hyderabad's brand image.

## Poll Body Asks Delhi Electoral Chief To Investigate Complaints Filed By AAP

**Agencies :** The Election Commission on Thursday asked its Delhi chief electoral officer to probe the Aam Aadmi Party's complaints against BJP leader Parvesh Verma and allegations of additions and deletions in the electoral roll of the New Delhi Assembly seat. Hours after Delhi Chief Minister and AAP leader Atishi led a delegation to the poll authority, the Commission directed the CEO to get the complaint inquired into, ascertain the actual facts, and take "immediate appropriate action" as per the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and electoral laws. "Action Taken Report shall also be sent to the Commission," EC told its top official in Delhi. An AAP delegation met the Commission on Thursday to raise allegations of violation of the Model Code of Conduct against Verma, the BJP's candidate from the New Delhi seat. They also raised allegations of additions and deletions in the electoral roll of the Assembly constituency of New Delhi.

## All 4 Indians accused in Hardeep Nijjar murder case granted bail by Canadian Court

**Agencies :** All four Indians accused in the murder case of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar have been granted bail by Canadian Court, according to a report by CNN-News18. The four accused - Karan Brar, Karanpreet Singh, Kamalpreet Singh and Amandeep Singh - were charged with first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder. Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023. Linked to Sikhs for Justice's Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, Nijjar was designated as terrorist by India's Ministry of Home Affairs in 2020. The case will now be heard on January 11.



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## IPS Ilma Afroz Case: Government formed a three-member panel in Ilma Afroz case, hearing will be held on Friday

**Diary Times Desk :** In the case related to the appointment of Ilma Afroz as SP in Baddi in Himachal Pradesh High Court, the government has formed a panel of three officers. This information was given to the court by the Advocate General of the state government. The division bench of High Court Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia and Satyen Vaidya will hear this case on Friday. In the last hearing in the court, the government had said that IPS Afroz had demanded her transfer. In such a situation, she was posted in Shimla Police Headquarters. After this, the post of SP in Baddi is lying vacant. A public interest litigation has been filed in the High Court regarding this. In this, the court has been requested to redeploy Ilma Afroz to the post of SP of Baddi.



## Taliban calls India a 'significant regional partner' after officials meet

**Agencies :** The Taliban has called India a "significant regional and economic partner" after a meeting was held between senior foreign ministry officials of the two countries, the highest such talks since the Afghan group's takeover of Kabul in 2021. India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met acting Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai on Wednesday, reports said. In a statement later, Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said they discussed expanding their relations and boosting trade through Chabahar Port in Iran, which India has been developing for goods to bypass the ports of Karachi and Gwadar in its rival Pakistan. "In line with Afghanistan's balanced and economy-focused foreign policy, the Islamic Emirate aims to strengthen political and economic ties with India as a significant regional and economic partner," the statement said.

## Solan News: Supplier arrested with drugs and 14 cartridges in Nalagarh, 10 mobile phones and cash also recovered

**Diary Times Desk :** Police has arrested a drug supplier from Nalagarh. Police has taken this action on the information given by the accused arrested in the case of Chitta. On Thursday, police raided the house of the accused and recovered 14 cartridges, Chitta, Churapost, ten mobile phones and cash. He was arrested and taken to Arki. Now preparations are being made to present the accused in the court. Police investigation is going on. SP Solan Gaurav Singh said that on January 4, during patrolling, police recovered 9.20 grams of Chitta from two youths Akshay Kumar resident of village Tukadi post office Kunihar and Bhawani Singh resident of village Badog Jobri tehsil Arki near village Dumahar. A case was registered against them and investigation was started, while the accused were also taken on police remand after being produced in the court. It was revealed from the accused that they had bought this Chitta from a person named Shera Chacha from Nalagarh for Rs 30,000. On this, the team of Police Station Arki raided the house of accused Sher Mohammad resident Nalagarh on 8 January. Police recovered more than 6 grams of chitta, 1.137 kg of poppy husk, 14 illegal cartridges, 10 mobile phones and cash worth about Rs 39,000 from him.

## Panic in 3 Maharashtra villages as people suffer sudden hairfall, over 30 bald within a week

**Agencies :** In a health crisis that has left many perplexed, several villages in Maharashtra's Buldhana district have reported sudden and severe hair loss among residents, leaving many completely bald in just a few days. The unexplained condition has triggered widespread panic, with authorities launching investigations into its cause. As many as 30 to 40 people from Kalvad, Bondgaon, and Hingna villages in Shegaon tehsil have reported significant hair loss, prompting the district health department to step in. Among the affected are men, women, and children, with locals dubbing the phenomenon the "Baldness Virus." Residents described the condition as alarming and rapid. A simple tug on the hair was enough to pull it out, and bald patches appeared within days. Rama Patil Tharkar, Sarpanch of one of the villages, told Times Now, "A strange disease has spread in my village for the last ten days, where citizens are losing their hair. There's fear among villagers."

## Himachal: Now 1 crore insurance cover to the family of police personnel in case of death due to accident, amendment in agreement

**Diary Times Desk :** In case of accidental death, the family members of deceased police personnel holding SBI accounts will now be given an insurance cover of Rs 1 crore. Earlier this amount was Rs 50 lakh. The financial benefits have been increased by amending the agreement signed between Himachal Police and State Bank of India. At the same time, air accident death cover has been increased from Rs 1 crore to Rs 1.60 crore. In case of permanent disability due to accident, insurance cover of Rs 1 crore will be given from Rs 50 lakh. Group term life insurance has been increased from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. Apart from this, the benefit of locker discount up to 50 percent will be given for select variants. Additional benefit of free medical checkup will be given for Platinum and Rhodium accounts. Air ambulance coverage up to Rs 10 lakh and educational and marriage assistance for children will be given with a cover of up to Rs 10 lakh. This initiative has been taken to provide comprehensive financial and welfare solutions to Himachal Pradesh police personnel and their families.



## No direct train from Kashmir to New Delhi; Katra Railway Station to serve as point for boarding and de-boarding

**Agencies :** With trains set to chug between Kashmir and New Delhi, a media report today said that all trains traveling to Srinagar or returning to New Delhi will make a stop at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Railway Station in Jammu for transshipment. Railway officials, citing security concerns, have confirmed that Katra station will be the point where passengers will need to change trains. "Trains either coming from Srinagar or returning to New Delhi will stop at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Railway Station in Katra, Jammu, where passengers will have to board another train to complete their journey," ETV Bharat quoted officials as saying. As per the report, platform number 1 has been designated for Kashmir-bound trains. "When a train arrives at this platform, all passengers will have to deboard and exit the station. They will then need to re-scan their luggage at the departure lounge before boarding the train stationed at platform number 1 for their onward journey. The same train will not continue to further destinations."





## Himachal Pradesh High Court: Himachal High Court will remain closed from January 13 to February 23, holiday schedule released

**Diary Times Desk :** The schedule of winter vacations has been released for Himachal Pradesh High Court. The high court will remain closed from January 13 to February 23. During this time only very important cases will be heard in the high court. Hearings will take place only on one day in a week, i.e. on Friday. In case there is a government holiday on Friday, then hearing will take place on Thursday instead. For the first time in the state High Court, Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia will hear cases for two days during the holidays, between February 7 and 9. Judge Bipin Chandra Negi will hear cases from January 13 to January 24, followed by Judge Rakesh Kainthala from January 27 to February 6 and Judge Ranjan Sharma from February 10 to February 23.



## Himachal: Pankaj Chandel of Bilaspur hoisted the tricolor on Kigar Ri mountain in Ladakh

**Diary Times Desk :** Mountaineer Pankaj Chandel of Panoh village of Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh has brought laurels to the state by achieving another feat. He hoisted the tricolor by climbing the peak of 6100 meter high Mount Kiagar Ri in Ladakh. Pankaj achieved this feat on January 1 in a temperature of less than -30 degree Celsius. He started the campaign on December 28 from Sumdo village of Ladakh with Rahul, Shubham and Nikita. With the achievement, Pankaj gave the message to the youth to live a drug-free life and join the Fit India Movement. He told that while climbing Mount Kiagar Ri, he and his team took full caution even in difficult conditions. Pankaj has been active in the field of mountaineering for 10 years and provides technical information and employment opportunities of mountaineering. He also hoisted the Indian tricolor on Iran's highest peak Mount Damavand in 2024. Pankaj said that his aim is not only mountaineering but also to make the youth aware of fitness.

## Jairam Thakur: Leader of Opposition said- Both Aam Aadmi Party and Congress will be wiped out in Delhi elections

**Diary Times Desk :** Leader of Opposition Jairam Thakur said that this time the Bharatiya Janata Party will form its government in Delhi with a huge majority. Congress and Aam Aadmi Party will be wiped out in this assembly election. Lies have no hands and legs and they get exposed very quickly. The anti-development and anti-poor face of Congress and AAP has been completely exposed, so no matter how many lies they tell or how many oaths they take in Delhi, not a single Delhi resident will now believe the words of Aam Aadmi Party and Congress. Jairam Thakur said that by telling lies again and again, one cannot gain the trust of anyone, so Congress and AAP cannot gain the trust and support of the voters of Delhi now. Aam Aadmi Party and Congress together have told as many lies and cheated as they could. Both of them even contested the elections together in Delhi to stop.

## HP Water Scam: Vigilance investigated the drinking water supply scam in Theog, visited the pump house

**Diary Times Desk :** Vigilance investigation has intensified in the irregularities in drinking water supply in Theog assembly constituency of Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. On Thursday, a team formed under the leadership of ASP Narveer Singh Rathore reached Theog to investigate the scam. During this, suspended engineers, contractors and drivers were called for questioning. The team reached Jal Shakti Department office in Theog and questioned the blacklisted contractors who supply tankers. Many departmental employees were also questioned. The team also checked the documents of the vehicles from the tanker drivers. The log book of the vehicles was also checked. The vigilance team visited the pump house located at Lelupool. During this, the team also went to see the place from where the work of filling the tanks is done. During this, they recorded the statements of the departmental employees. Apart from this, the team also asked for many other documents from the employees. The team also questioned the CCTV cameras installed at the pump house, but no cameras of any kind have been installed in the pump house.

## Shimla: Ice skating started again in Shimla rink after a week, a solid layer of ice has frozen

**Diary Times Desk :** After a week-long wait, ice skating started again in the morning at Shimla's historic ice skating rink. Since the skating session held on January 1, skating could not take place due to bad weather. The continuous rain had hindered the formation of ice on the rink, due to which skating lovers had to face disappointment. On Wednesday, about 60 people participated in skating in the morning session. A crowd of skating lovers started gathering at the rink since morning. The participants included both local residents and tourists. Rink Secretary Rajat Malhotra said that the skating session had to be cancelled last week due to bad weather, but we are happy to see the enthusiasm of the participants in today's event. He said that the trials for ice hockey for the Khelo India National Games will be held in Kaza on January 11. Shimla Ice Skating Rink is known for its historical and cultural importance. It is Asia's largest natural ice skating rink, which attracts local residents and tourists during the winter season. The skating season here is between December and February, when a layer of ice is formed due to cold winds and clear skies.

## Himachal Weather: Many districts of Himachal in the grip of cold wave, chances of rain and snowfall in the state for two days

**Diary Times Desk :** There are chances of change in weather in Himachal Pradesh due to the activity of western disturbance. Meteorological Center Shimla has predicted rain and snowfall in the state for two days. At the same time, yellow alert has been issued for cold wave and dense fog in many districts. Minimum temperature has been recorded in minus at nine places in the state. Due to cold wave, people are forced to hide in their homes in the morning and evening. The weather is expected to remain clear in the state today and tomorrow. According to the Meteorological Department, there is a possibility of snowfall in some parts of the middle and high mountain areas of the state from the evening of January 11 to midnight of January 12 or morning of January 13. At the same time, there is a forecast of rain and snowfall at some tourist places of the state.

## Himachal News: The electricity department handed over a bill of two billion rupees to a businessman of Himachal, his eyes were wide open after seeing such a huge amount

**Diary Times Desk :** The owner of a small scale industry making concrete bricks in Behdawan Jattan village under sub division Bhoranji of district Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh has received a bill of more than two billion rupees. The businessman was shocked to see the electricity bill of Rs 2,10,42,08,405. Lalit Dhiman was shocked to see the bill of billions of rupees. Lalit Dhiman, who makes cement bricks from concrete near Behdawan, and his son Ashish Dhiman said that when they received the electricity bill, they were stunned. The electricity board employee handed them a bill of billions of rupees. He later went to the electricity board office and complained about it. After the complaint, he has now received a bill of Rs 4,047. Regarding this, SDO of Electricity Board Bhoranji Anurag Chandel said that such a high bill has come due to technical reasons. A complaint was received and his bill has been rectified. Now the consumer has been given a bill of Rs 4,047.

## Arvind Kejriwal asks EC to bar Parvesh Verma from Delhi election, 'raid his house'

**Agencies :** Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday met senior officials of the Election Commission and demanded that his New Delhi assembly constituency rival, BJP's Parvesh Verma, be barred from contesting the Delhi election. Accusing the former MP of "openly distributing money", the ex chief minister asked the poll panel to "raid his house". "The BJP candidate in the New Delhi Assembly constituency, Parvesh Verma, is organising job camps, openly distributing money... These things come under corrupt practices under the rules and regulations of the Election Commission... Parvesh Verma should be barred from contesting elections and his house should be raided to find out how much money he has at his house," Arvind Kejriwal said after meeting the Election Commission. The AAP supremo reiterated his allegation that fake voters were being added to the electoral rolls. "In the New Delhi Assembly constituency, from 15 December to 7 January, in 22 days, 5,500 applications have come for cancellation of votes... These applications are fake... When the officials took cognizance of the matter, the people in whose name applications for cancellation of votes were given were called.

## Arvind Kejriwal wants inclusion of Delhi Jats in Central OBC list, BJP questions timing

**Agencies :** Aam Aadmi Party convener Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday demanded the inclusion of Delhi's Jat community in the Centre's Other Backward Classes (OBC) list. Addressing a press conference, the former Delhi chief minister accused the Centre of "misleading" the Jats for the past decade and failing to deliver on its promises. "In 2015, the BJP invited Jat leaders to the prime minister's residence and assured them that Delhi's Jat community would be included in the Central OBC list. Union Home Minister Amit Shah promised the same in 2019. However, nothing has been done to fulfil these promises," PTI quoted Kejriwal as saying. The AAP chief questioned why Jat students from Rajasthan benefit from reservations at Delhi University (DU), while Jat students from Delhi are denied the same. "Thousands of children from the Jat community in Delhi are unable to secure admission in DU because they are not part of the Central OBC list," he added.

## Tirupati stampede survivors recall horror: 'For 5 mins, we thought all of us were dead'



**Agencies :** Survivors of the deadly stampede at Tirupati that left six dead and nearly 40 injured recounted the horror of the incident on Thursday, saying that they thought they wouldn't survive the accident. They also complained of long waiting hours to get tickets for Vaikunta Dwara Darshanam, which they attributed to the sudden opening of the gates, which prompted the crowd to surge ahead. "For five minutes, we thought all of us were dead. I have been coming to the temple for the past 25 years and it has never happened like this," D Venkata Lakshmi told a local news channel, according to PTI. She said that people rushed forward and up to 10 fell down where she stood. "Though I was raising a hue and cry that I was falling on the side, people were still rushing from behind and could not be controlled. I don't know if they were pushing ahead, but the men were uncontrollable. People were walking over devotees. I could not even breathe for a long time," she said. She also alleged that the disaster could have been averted if the police had allowed devotees to proceed in an orderly way.

## 4 Killed After Silo Collapses At Chhattisgarh Plant, Many Feared Trapped

**Agencies :** Four workers were killed and four more are feared trapped after a silo at a steel plant collapsed in Chhattisgarh's Mungeli district on Thursday, police said. The accident took place in the afternoon at the Kusum Steel plant located in Mungeli's Saragaon area, said Mungeli Superintendent of Police Bhojram Patel. The silo - a tall cylindrical iron structure used to store bulk materials - collapsed on around eight workers present at the site, according to officials. After being alerted, police reached the spot and a rescue operation was launched, the official said. Efforts are now underway to rescue.

## Himachal Pradesh cabinet approves uniform stamp duty rate of 12%

**Agencies :** The cabinet on Thursday approved the levy of uniform stamp duty rate of 12% on transfer and lease transactions secured under Section 118(2)(H) of the Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and Land Reforms Act, 1972, with prior sanction from the state government. The cabinet meeting, chaired by chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, decided to promulgate an ordinance amending Schedule 1A of the Indian Stamp Act, 1899. This amendment will enable the levy of a uniform stamp duty rate of 12%. The cabinet also approved the ban.

## Delhi pollution: GRAP 3 invoked as AQI drops amid dense fog

**Agencies :** The Commission of Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Thursday invoked the Stage III restrictions under the anti-pollution Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR amid increased air pollution and declining trends of the air quality index (AQI). The Commission said that in accordance with the Supreme Court's directions to impose GRAP measures, it was invoking the Stage-3 restrictions as "AQI of Delhi which was recorded as 297 on January 8, exhibited a sharp increasing trend and has been recorded 357 at 4 pm on January 9 due to calm winds and foggy conditions". The panel noted that in addition to this, the restrictions under Stage I and II of the revised GRAP shall remain in place, adding that authorities will continue to monitor and review the AQI levels in the entire Delhi and national capital region (NCR). "Citizens are requested to strictly adhere to the citizen charter under GRAP Stage-III," the notice from CAQM.

## Pune Man Kills Colleague With Cleaver In Office Parking Lot, No One Intervenes

**Agencies :** A 28-year-old woman was attacked with a cleaver by a colleague in the parking lot of their company in Pune on Tuesday, allegedly because she borrowed money from him under false pretences. Several people witnessed the horrific attack, but no one intervened. The woman died of her injuries. Krishna Kanoja, 30, an accountant at WNS Global - a business process outsourcing (BPO) company in Yerawada - told the police that his colleague, 28-year-old Shubhada Kodare, had borrowed money from him.

## 'My first podcast, don't know how it'll go': PM Modi's candid conversation with Nikhil Kamath

**Agencies :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the next guest on Zerodha co-founder Nikhil Kamath's podcast, a new trailer has revealed. Earlier, Kamath had shared a teaser of the next episode of his podcast "WTF is with Nikhil Kamath" where he was seen talking to a mystery guest in Hindi. The trailer sent social media into a frenzy with most users guessing that the mystery guest was none other than the prime minister. A day later, Kamath shared an extended trailer for the episode, showing him in a candid conversation with PM Modi. "I am sitting here in front on you and talking, I feel nervous. It's a tough conversation for me," Kamath says in the video in Hindi. "This is my first podcast, I don't know how it'll go with your audience," the prime minister responded, as the two shared a laugh. The Zerodha co-founder shared his vision for the podcast, saying that he wanted to draw parallels between politics and entrepreneurship through their conversation.





## Trump Alleges California Burning As Governor Tried To Save "Worthless" Fish

**Agencies :** As thousands flee their homes in California due to wildfires, US President-Elect Donald Trump has launched a scathing attack on Governor Gavin Newsom, saying "this is all his fault" and he must quit. Earlier, Trump alleged that the Governor's policies were to blame for the situation in some of the US's most prominent cities. The Governor has hit back, saying people are fleeing and the President-Elect's response is to politicise it. Among the worst-hit areas is Los Angeles, home to top Hollywood celebrities. At least five people have been killed and 1,500 buildings damaged as firefighters struggle to control the blaze. Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said they don't have enough firefighters to tackle the situation. "We're doing the very best we can. But no, we don't have enough fire personnel in LA County between all the departments to handle this," he said, according to an AFP report. In a post on TruthSocial, Trump alleged that the California Governor had refused to sign a water restoration declaration that would have allowed millions of gallons into California.

## India slips 5 spots in list of world's most powerful passports; Singapore leads

**Agencies :** India's ranking has dropped five places – from 80th to 85th – in the list of the world's most powerful passports, according to the Henley Passport Index 2025. The Henley Passport Index ranks all 199 passports according to the number of destinations they can access visa-free. It is based on exclusive Timatic data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). As per its latest standing, an Indian passport holder can travel visa-free to 57 destinations. The country shares its rank with Equatorial Guinea and Niger. Singapore has continued to dominate the list of the world's strongest passports, achieving a top rank in 2025 as well. According to the Henley Passport Index, a person with a Singapore passport can travel visa-free to 195 destinations across the world. It is followed by Japan (193 countries), Finland (192 countries), France (192 countries).

## Video Shows Before And After Wildfire Burnt Down Iconic Building In US

**Agencies :** A 100-year-old iconic building, housing a Starbucks outlet, was reduced to ashes after a wildfire swept through Southern California and left a trail of devastation. At least five people died, and hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated amid reports of numerous homes and properties burnt to the ground. Among the casualties was also the historic building commissioned in 1924 in California's Palisades Village – a shopping centre. A video capturing the before-and-after moments of the structure has been shared widely on social media. An X user posted a picture of the Palisades Starbucks, a century-old beauty before it was ravaged by the devastating fire. Another user wrote, "The loss of a 100-year-old historic building really puts into perspective how these fires destroy more than just property – they're erasing pieces of California's heritage."



## Elon Musk Reacts To Rajya Sabha MP's "Pakistani Grooming Gangs" Post



**Agencies :** Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said the blame for grooming gangs in UK cannot be laid on Asia, but "one rogue nation" Pakistan, a statement SpaceX and Tesla CEO Elon Musk said was "true". Her statement came on a day the UK's opposition Conservative party had sought to use Parliamentary debate to force the establishment of a new national inquiry into widespread sexual abuse of primarily white British girls by men of mostly Pakistani origin in various northern English towns, spanning several decades. Ms Chaturvedi objected to Britain's Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer's statement on Monday in which he said that during his time as head of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) between 2008 and 2013, he had brought the first prosecution of an Asian grooming gang. The grooming gangs row has increased the pressure on Mr Starmer, who was CPS at the time of the scandals. He hit out this week at "lies and misinformation" around the issue.

## Millionaire CEO sparks outrage over hiring private firefighters during LA wildfire crisis

**Agencies :** Amid wildfire that raced across the Hollywood Hills, Keith Wasserman, a millionaire CEO from Los Angeles, sparked widespread outrage after offering to pay "any amount" to private firefighters to protect his luxury Pacific Palisades home. Critics accused Wasserman of prioritizing his own property while others faced devastating losses. Wasserman, co-founder of Gelt Venture Partners, made the controversial offer on X (formerly Twitter) as the Palisades fire rapidly engulfed the area. "Does anyone have access to private firefighters to protect our home in Pacific Palisades? Need to act fast here. All neighbours houses burning. Will pay any amount. Thank you," he wrote. The post, viewed over million times before being deleted, was met with swift backlash.

## Meet Japan's 'do nothing' guy: Once fired for being idle, now gets paid millions for it

**Agencies :** A Japanese man who was once fired for "not doing anything" of value now makes ₹69 lakh for doing nothing. 41-year-old Morimoto, popularly known as the rental "do nothing" guy in Japan, now loans himself out to strangers who just want someone to keep them company in a non-romantic way. While it may sound bizarre, the requests can range from just being on a video call to keep someone company while the client cleans her room to waiting for a marathon runner at the finishing line. Talking to CNBC Make It, Morimoto revealed that once a client who could not attend a concert with a friend asked him to take her place. He is so popular he receives about 1,000 requests to "do nothing" every year but lets his clients to decide how much to pay him. However, his services don't come cheap. He charged anywhere from ₹5,400 and ₹16,200 for two to three hours but he later introduced the pay-as-you-wish model. "I charge a voluntary fee, so I don't know if it will be sustainable, but I'm having fun trying to see if it's sustainable," Morimoto said, adding that his goal was to "simply live life and enjoy it".

## Iranian Woman Removes Cleric's Turban, Wears It As Hijab In Bold Protest

**Agencies :** A video from Iran showing a woman confronting a cleric at an airport in Mehrabad is going viral on social media. In the clip, shared on X by user Navid Mohebbi, the woman, seen without a hijab, angrily removes the cleric's turban and places it on her head like a scarf during the altercation. "So you have honour now?" she says to the cleric, before searching for her husband and asking "What did you do to my husband?" The exact date and cause of the initial confrontation is unclear. Sharing the video on X, Mr Mohebbi wrote, "Brave Iranian Woman Confronts A Mullah in Iran. Mehrabad Airport: A woman without a hijab angrily grabs a mullah's turban and wraps it around her own head. It appears the mullah had previously argued with her". According to Iran International, the woman confronted the cleric for allegedly harassing her about not wearing a hijab. However, Mashregh News, a media outlet affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), reported that the incident was unrelated to hijab. The outlet also claimed that the woman had "psychological problems". She was detained briefly but later released "with the consent of the complainants".

## SAD to take call on Sukhbir's resignation at Jan 10 meeting



**Agencies :** The Shiromani Akali Dal has called a meeting of its working committee on Friday to decide on the resignation of Sukhbir Singh Badal as its chief and initiate the process to reorganise the party. SAD spokesperson Daljeet Singh Cheema said the meeting has been scheduled for January 10 at 3 pm at the party's Chandigarh office. The decision came hours after a Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) delegation met Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh, who had on Monday asked the party to immediately implement the edict pronounced by five high Sikh priests on December 2. The Akal Takht — the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs — had held Badal and several other SAD leaders guilty of religious misconduct over issues concerning the community during the party's rule from 2007-17. The later part of the SAD regime, which ruled in alliance with the BJP, was marked by incidents of the desecration of religious texts and subsequent police firing on protesters that resulted in the death of two persons in 2015. Badal was also awarded a 10-day religious punishment for the mistakes, for which he had submitted an unconditional apology through a letter to the Akal Takht.

## Protests escalate in DLF Phase 5 Gurugram as residents resist utility disruptions

**Agencies :** Chaos erupted in DLF Phase 5 as residents of 81 economically weaker section (EWS) quarters staged a protest after their sewerage and water connections were cut off. The situation escalated when one resident doused himself in kerosene, threatening self-immolation. The affected units had their occupation certificates (OCs) revoked recently by the Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) due to alleged illegal constructions and unauthorised commercial use. Residents alleged that the DTCP and DLF were targeting them to clear the 'view' for the builder's upcoming luxury project, Summit. A DLF official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, stated, "This action is in compliance with DTCP orders. We have no role beyond that." DTCP officials, however, clarified their stance, citing regulatory violations as the reason for the cancellations. "We conducted a survey across DLF areas from Phase 1 to 5 and issued notices to violators. Only after providing ample opportunities for compliance have we taken action," said DTP Gurugram.

## Last date extended, but few takers for Fasal Bima Yojana

**Agencies :** The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) has been receiving a lukewarm response from farmers in Kurukshetra and Ambala districts. The last date of getting crops insured was December 31, but it was extended till January 15 after seeing the poor response. As per data procured from the agriculture department for the rabi 2024-25 season, only 1,834 farmers have opted for the crop insurance and paid their share of premium of Rs 40.91 lakh for insurance of 3,564 hectares in Kurukshetra district. Similarly, in Ambala district, 3,012 farmers have opted for the insurance and paid a premium of Rs 46 lakh for 4,250 hectares. Officials said since the scheme was voluntary and the government compensated farmers through Kshatipurti portal, the farmers were not showing much interest in insurance. However, the farmers said delayed compensation from insurance companies and complaints related to survey after loss were the reasons behind the poor response. Bhartiya Kisan Union (Charuni) spokesman Rakesh Bains said, "The insurance scheme has failed."

## Tewari writes to Sitharaman, bats for international financial centre in Chandigarh

**Agencies :** Chandigarh MP and former union minister Manish Tewari has suggested the establishment of an international financial centre (IFC) in Chandigarh, modelled on the Gujarat International Tec-City (GIFT City). In a letter written to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Tewari said the project would bolster the region's economy and elevate India's position as a global financial powerhouse. On making Chandigarh an ideal choice, he said the city had a strategic location and accessibility given its exceptional geographic positioning as the shared capital of Punjab and Haryana coupled with its proximity to Himachal Pradesh, which placed it at the heart of north India's economic matrix. He said the city had outstanding connectivity through road, rail and air, including an international airport facilitating seamless domestic and global access — a critical prerequisite for an IFC. Referring to the unmatched social and physical infrastructure, he said Chandigarh exemplified the confluence of modernity and meticulous urban planning, offering unparalleled infrastructure and a superior quality of life. Tewari further said the Union Territory was known for its heritage, modern infrastructure, organised layout and high standard of living.

## AAP moves court for 'show of hands' instead of secret ballot in Chandigarh mayoral poll

**Agencies :** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) today approached the Punjab and Haryana High Court, seeking directions for the Chandigarh administration to ensure transparency in the upcoming mayoral polls scheduled for January 24. AAP's councillor from Ward No. 25 filed the petition, demanding, among other things, that voting be conducted by "show of hands" instead of the secret ballot method. On January 3, a delegation from AAP, led by Mayor Kuldeep Kumar, met Deputy Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav and submitted a memorandum requesting.

## Mysterious blast at Gumtala police chowki in Amritsar

**Agencies :** Panic gripped the area after a suspected minor 'blast' rocked Gumtala police chowki located on the Gumtala bypass road here on Thursday night. Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar denied any explosion saying there was a leakage in the radiator of a car belonging to a cop. He said a minor blast in the radiator might have occurred. However, a heavy police force outside the police chowki and on the flyover in front of it pointed to something else. The windshield of a car parked outside the police chowki developed cracks. The car belonged to an ASI. This is the ninth blast in Punjab since November 23. ISI-backed Babbar Khalsa International with their handlers and operatives have claimed the responsibility for these blasts.

## Amritpal's father condemns UAPA charge against son



**Agencies :** Tarsem Singh, father of Independent MP and 'Waris Punjab De' chief Amritpal Singh, criticised the imposition of the Unlawful Activities and Prevention Act (UAPA) on his son, calling it a "conspiracy" to stop the jailed MP's family from launching a political party. Speaking to ANI about the UAPA charge, Tarsem said on Thursday, "Now when the imposition of NSA on him comes to an end, they have already imposed UAPA. When we are planning to launch a political party, it is a conspiracy to stop us. Bhagwant Mann's anti-Sikh mindset is being exposed. Without any proof or investigation, such things are being done to defame Amritpal." Earlier on Thursday, Faridkot SP confirmed that UAPA had been invoked against the jailed MP. "The UAP Act was extended on the basis of the facts after the investigation of the case of Gurpreet Hari murder. It also includes the name of Arsh Dalla, a designated terrorist. We cannot speak further on the action being taken, the investigation is ongoing," SP Jasmeet Singh told ANI.



## Adopt modern technology to streamline operations: Sukhu

**Diary Times Desk :** Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today directed the Labour and Employment Department to focus on digitisation of data and adopt modern technology to streamline its operations. While reviewing the functioning of the department here today, he said that all the operations of the department must be digitised and data of skilled persons in various fields must be available online. He directed the department to implement this initiative immediately as this will be helpful in offering employment and self-employment opportunities to the interested persons. Sukhu said during the last two years of the Congress regime, 39,220 jobs have been provided to the youth out of which 13,704 jobs were given in the government sector alone. He added that recruitment process was also going on to fill the vacant posts in various departments. "The state government has rolled down Rajiv Gandhi Swarojgar Start-Up Yojna to provide self-employment opportunities to the youth of the state and so far 121 candidates had been recommended by the Transport Department to grant subsidy for the purchase of e-taxi which will help reducing carbon footprints," he said.

## CM spares his chopper to airlift ailing employee

**Diary Times Desk :** Showing compassion, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today spared his helicopter to airlift an ailing government employee from the remote Kwar area of Shimla district for medical treatment here in the state capital. Responding to an urgent medical emergency, the CM directed Shimla district administration to airlift Virender Thakur, an employee at the SDM Office in Kwar, who was suffering from shooting pain and required immediate medical assistance. The Chief Minister spared his helicopter and sent it to Kwar immediately. The person along with his daughter was airlifted at 4:13 pm from Kwar and arrived at the IGMC, Shimla, around 5:00 pm and his condition is reported to be stable. Sukhu directed the IGMC authorities to provide the best possible medical care.

## Snow, rain likely in Shimla on Jan 11-12



**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal is "very likely" to receive rainfall and snowfall on January 11-12. Besides, cold dry conditions, too, will prevail in the state from January 11 onwards. As per the weather department, light to moderate spells of snowfall are "very likely" over some parts of the mid and high hills from the evening of January 11 till early morning of January 13. Major tourist destinations like Shimla are also likely to get some a few spells of light to moderate rainfall/snowfall on January 11-12. In some areas falling in plains and lower hills, a light to moderate spell of rainfall is likely during this period. In the areas where snowfall is expected, the department has issued a warning for skidding of vehicles, low visibility, and the disruption of basic facilities like power and water during these two days.

## Himachal Govt pays tribute to Manmohan Singh, credits him for landmark initiatives

**Diary Times Desk :** Acknowledging the significant contribution of Dr Manmohan Singh towards the development of Himachal Pradesh, the Cabinet paid rich tributes to the former prime minister on Thursday. The Cabinet, which met here under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, paid rich tributes to the ex-PM and observed a two-minute silence in his memory. The Cabinet credited him for granting several key projects for HP and his unwavering support for the development and specific needs of the hill state. It also gave its nod to rename Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA) at Fairlawns near here to Dr Manmohan Singh Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration. The Cabinet specifically mentioned the support from the late PM for key projects in Himachal, including the Rohtang-Atal tunnel, three medical colleges, the ESIC Hospital at Ner Chowk, IIT-Mandi, IIIT-Una, Kangra Central University and the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) in Kangra. It observed that Dr Manmohan Singh's tenure as the PM and Union Finance Minister was transformative.

## Case registered against Kangra bank officials and businessman in Rs 20 crore loan scam

**Diary Times Desk :** The Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau has registered a case against Yudh Chand Bains, proprietor of M/s Himalaya Snow Village and M/s Hotel Lake Palace, and officials of Kangra Central Cooperative Bank Limited (KCCB) in connection with an alleged Rs 20 crore loan scam. The FIR was registered under Sections 420, 468, 471, 120-B IPC, 13 (1) and 13 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2018. The case was registered after a complaint was received from the Secretary (Cooperation) to the Government of Himachal, alleging that Yudh Chand Bains had taken multiple loans from KCCB, and the bank's officials had disregarded their own lending policies and guidelines of the RBI and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). According to the inquiry, the bank had disbursed Rs 20 crore directly to the borrower, violating the Credit Monitoring Rules fixed by NABARD. The rules state that loans exceeding Rs 40 lakh cannot be given to individuals without permission from NABARD. The controversy surrounding the loan was further.

## Generation down, power board procuring 200 lu from outside

**Diary Times Desk :** The state electricity board is procuring over 200 lakh units (lu) per day from outside the state to meet its daily power demand of around 370 lakh units per day. While it's getting around 130 lakh units daily through banking system – the state gives surplus energy to other states in summers and gets it back in winters – around 80 lakh units are being procured through market tie-ups and open market. "Under market tie-ups, we purchase power much earlier as we know there will be deficit in winters. Besides, some power has to be purchased from open market on real time basis to manage sudden increase in demand or dip in generation," said an HPSEBL official. Incidentally, the power generation in the state has dropped to around 20 per cent of the peak power generation. Over the last few days, the daily power generation has been around 150-160 lakh units per day. Of this, the HPSEBL managed projects are generating around 18 lakh units per day, the generation from the projects run by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (HPPCL) is 7 lakh units per day. Besides, the board is getting around 33 lakh units free power from Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and around 100 lakh units from the Central Public Sector Undertakings operating in the state.



## Ravichandran Ashwin "Was Insulted": On India Star's Abrupt Retirement, Ex-India Star Drops Bombshell

**Agencies :** Former India batter Manoj Tiwary on Thursday said current national team head coach Gautam Gambhir is "not the right choice" for the top job and he is only adept in mentoring IPL franchises, citing the side's recent struggles to support his remarks. Under Gambhir, India lost an ODI series in Sri Lanka for the first time in 27 years, and they hit a new low when they were whitewashed 0-3 by New Zealand at home, unprecedented in the country's cricket history. Recently, India lost the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade, and Tiwary, who has had a dressing room altercation with Gambhir during their playing days in the IPL, took note of these reversals since his appointment as the coach. "See, the results are there to be seen. Results don't lie. Numbers don't lie. The record speaks for itself," Tiwary told PTI in an interview. Now a deputy sports minister in the West Bengal government, the 39-year-old Tiwary and Gambhir had an altercation in the KKR dressing room during the 2013 Indian Premier League. Questioning Gambhir's coaching methods and his lack of success with the Indian team, Tiwary said, "he has not been able to carry on the good work which Rahul Dravid did."



## Short TAKES

### 41 Days From Champions Trophy, State Of Pakistan Stadiums Amid Row

**Agencies :** Amidst fears that the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 may not be properly hosted by host nation Pakistan due to the existing state of underdeveloped stadiums, Pakistan-based journalist Farid Khan has shared a video showing the work in progress at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. Earlier, a report had emerged stating that stadiums in all three cities - Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi - are still under construction, with just over a month till the Champions Trophy gets underway. However, the visual shared by the journalist shows the extent in which work is being done at the Gaddafi Stadium. The visuals paint a picture that the stadiums are indeed being constructed, almost from scratch. Bricks, ladders, cement and construction tools and vehicles can all be spotted in the video. As per the social media post by the journalist, more than 250 workers are on-site in order to complete the stadium construction before the given deadline of January 25. Following a report by The Times of India, where a source stated the underprepared nature of the Pakistani stadiums, it was said that a "miracle" would be needed from both the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC) to pull off the construction work in time.

### Sam Konstas Reveals Surprising Chat With Virat Kohli After Boxing Day Test Altercation

**Agencies :** Young Australian batting sensation Sam Konstas revealed his interaction with star India batter Virat Kohli following a physical altercation between both during the fourth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). The Boxing Day Test between both rivals was a cinematic affair right from the start. A 19-year-old Konstas faced off against a red-hot Jasprit Bumrah, one of the best pacers in the world who had single-handedly kept India alive in the series. The youngster displayed immense fearlessness and audacity in taking down Bumrah with some ramp shots, stunning the packed MCG crowd. Konstas looted 34 of his 60 runs off Bumrah only. To top it all, Konstas got into a heated exchange of words with Virat when the latter bumped his shoulder into his. The incident rattled both the Indian and Australian dressing rooms in different ways and set the tone for a classic Test match.

### Steve Smith to lead Australia in Sri Lanka

**Agencies :** Steve Smith has been named Australia's captain for their tour of Sri Lanka. Pat Cummins is out on a paternity leave whilst also nursing an ankle issue which was "managed through the summer" said Cricket Australia. Josh Hazlewood is still on the sidelines with the injury that kept him out of the latter part of the series against India while Mitchell Marsh has been dropped. The squad contains only three frontline pacers in Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland and Sean Abbott while the spin attack has been bolstered with both Todd Murphy and Matt Kuhnemann picked to support Nathan Lyon. Although he was out-of-favour by the end of the India series, batter Nathan McSweeney too finds a spot in the 16-man squad named for the two-Test series which will be played in Galle. Cooper Connolly, the left-handed batter who also bowls some orthodox spin has earned a maiden call-up. "Sri Lanka is a challenging and exciting place to tour given the different conditions players may be presented with. This squad provides several ways to structure the XI depending on what type of wickets we may encounter in each match. We are excited about the opportunity ahead for the squad members who are at the start of their Test."

### Virat Kohli To Play County Cricket Ahead Of England Tests? Report Makes Stunning Claim

**Agencies :** Indian cricket team star batter Virat Kohli had a disappointing outing during the Test series against Australia. Despite scoring a brilliant ton in the first Test, he ended the five-match series with just 190 runs and his weakness against balls outside the off-stump resulted in a lot of criticism from both fans as well as experts. While there has been a lot of chatter about his future, Kohli is eyeing a County stint ahead of the England tour in order to prepare for the conditions, according to a report by Republic which quoted RevSportz. However, the report claimed that it will be difficult as the stint can clash with IPL. Virat Kohli will be "super motivated" to put a struggling phase behind him and the premier India batter is capable of returning to his run-making ways, said former South African captain Faf du Plessis on Wednesday. Kohli had a torrid time in Australia during the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy, amassing a mere 190 runs at an average of 23.75 across five Tests despite starting off with an unbeaten hundred in the first Test at Perth.

### Mohammed Shami likely to make ODI comeback vs England, in contention for a spot in Champions Trophy: Report

**Agencies :** Senior India pacer Mohammed Shami is on track to make his highly anticipated return to the Indian team for the upcoming white-ball series against England and, potentially, the 2024 Champions Trophy, according to a report from Cricbuzz. Shami, who has been sidelined since the 2023 World Cup final in November due to surgery on his right heel, has resumed playing white-ball cricket in recent weeks. His return is contingent on the clearance from the BCCI and the National Cricket Academy (NCA), but the report suggests he's close to full fitness and ready for a return to the international fold. Shami's recovery has been closely monitored by the NCA's medical team, who have ensured he's followed a rigorous rehabilitation process. After undergoing surgery on his right heel, the pacer made significant progress, but a brief knee swelling set him back, keeping him out of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

