

Union Budget: Himachal Hopes To Get Special Grant, Disaster Relief And Removal of Economic Restrictions



Diary Times Desk : The Himachal Pradesh government is expected to get special grants and disaster relief funds in the Union Budget to be presented on Saturday. There is also hope of removal of many types of economic restrictions imposed on the state. Sukhu government has placed several demands before the Center to bring the economy of the state, which is facing economic crisis, back on track. There is also hope from the Central Budget for increasing road, air and rail networks. Industrialists have pinned their hopes on the budget to get a special package to speed up industrialization. Citing the impact on work, the matter of removing the ceiling imposed for externally funded schemes has also been raised before the Center. The Center has not yet given a special relief package to compensate for the loss due to heavy rains in the year 2023. The government has raised the matter with the Center and urged to release funds in PDNA. The state government has raised the demand from the Center to remove the ceiling imposed for roads and increase the revenue deficit grant. The government has requested to announce it in the Union Budget to meet the revenue deficit. A demand has also been raised to include ropeways in the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. It has been suggested to provide 10 percent state share and maintenance cost for five years for the works done under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

Hamirpur: Himachal Pradesh started the National Games with a victory in Wushu

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh has started its Wushu competition with a victory in the 38th National Games which started at Maharana Pratap Stadium, Dehradun. Himachal Pradesh's Madhu has won the 70 kg weight category competition by defeating Neerja of Haryana. Himachal Pradesh Wushu Sports Association's General Secretary PN Azad said that this victory has boosted the morale of other players of the state and there is hope that Madhu will win the first medal for the state. He told that 10 players of the state are representing the state in the national competition.

'In Poor Taste'; Rashtrapati Bhavan Reacts To Sonia Gandhi's Remark

Agencies : Rashtrapati Bhavan has strongly responded to Congress MP Sonia Gandhi's remark referring to President Droupadi Murmu as a "poor thing". In a statement, Rashtrapati Bhavan clarified that the President was not fatigued at any point during her address to the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on Friday. "Nothing could be farther from the truth. The President was not tired at any point. Indeed, she believes that speaking up for marginalised communities, women and farmers, as she was doing in her address, can never be tiring," the statement read. The President's office also suggested that some political leaders might have misunderstood the nuances of Indian languages like Hindi, leading to an incorrect impression. "In any case, such comments are in poor taste, unfortunate, and entirely avoidable," the statement added. Furthermore, Rashtrapati Bhavan condemned statements from prominent Congress leaders that allegedly demeaned the dignity of the President's office. These leaders had claimed that President Murmu appeared exhausted by the end of her speech and could hardly speak.



118-member foreign delegation to visit Maha Kumbh on Saturday

Agencies : A 118-member foreign delegation will visit the Maha Kumbh site in Prayagraj on Saturday. Official sources said the delegation would include Heads of Mission (HoMs), spouses of HoMs, and diplomats from 77 countries. The Ministry of External Affairs has made the arrangements. The diplomats, including those from Russia and Ukraine, were scheduled to take a holy dip in the Sangam, visit Akshayvat and Bade Hanuman Temple and have an experience of the Digital Maha Kumbh Centre. However, Ukraine's Ambassador to India Oleksandr Polishchuk, would not participate in the Maha Kumbh alongside his Russian counterpart to oppose "aggression" by Moscow against Kyiv, the Ukrainian Embassy said.

Woman dies after being chased, repeatedly stabbed outside crowded eatery in Kolkata

Agencies : A woman died after she was chased and allegedly stabbed multiple times outside a popular eatery in full public view in the eastern fringes of Kolkata by three people, including a minor, police said on Friday. Rofiya Saquil, in her 20s, was reportedly dragged down from a car next to the eatery and chased before being fatally assaulted on Thursday evening, they said. The three suspects have been arrested and the body of the woman was sent for post-mortem, a police officer said. The police said they were probing the possible angle of an extra-marital affair between the woman, a resident of Raja Ramnarayan Street of Narkeldanga area, and Mohammed Fahrukh Ansari, whose family members are suspected to have carried out the attack.

Himachal: CM Sukhu said- Himachal is a small state, therefore it is not appropriate to have 153 IAS officers

Diary Times Desk : Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu, while talking informally to journalists in Solan on Friday, said that there is not a single international level airport in Himachal Pradesh and the entire cost of its construction should be borne by the Central Government. Along with this, the Central Government should also bear the entire cost of laying the Bhanupalli-Bilaspur-Bari and Chandigarh-Baddi railway lines. In response to a question, the Chief Minister said that the condition of Solan-Parwanoo four-lane is the most pathetic because its design has not been done properly. He said that he has discussed this matter with Union Surface Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari and he has demanded re-designing and re-alignment of this four-lane. In response to another question, Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu said that Himachal Pradesh is a small state with a population of about 70 lakhs, so it is not appropriate to keep 153 IAS.

India, US working on early visit of PM Modi to US: MEA

Agencies : India on Friday said it is working with the US on an "early" visit to Washington by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to further deepen the comprehensive global strategic partnership between the two countries. Following a phone conversation with Modi this week, US President Donald Trump said the Indian prime minister "is going to be coming to the White House, over next month, probably February". It would be Modi's first bilateral visit to Washington after Trump became US president for a second term. While confirming discussions between India and the US on the proposed visit, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal did not mention any possible time-line for the trip. In their phone conversation on January 27, Modi and Trump vowed to work towards.



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Maha Kumbh Stampede: Preeto was stressed due to the screams of the stampede, she disappeared in a few moments in the crowd of lakhs

Diary Times Desk : Seeing the stampede in Prayagraj Kumbh, Preeto Devi, a resident of Lahra in Galod, was extremely mentally stressed. She also suffered a leg injury during the stampede. Seeing the stampede of the crowd gathered at Sangam with her group, Preeto Devi was terrified. In this panic, she got separated from her group at 5 am on January 28, although her group found Preeto Devi at 11 am on January 29, but she was mentally stressed. Seeing the screams of people and dead bodies in the stampede, Preeto was so stressed that she did not even recognize the people of her group. The people of the group were bringing her to their camp Hari Om Sabha Samiti located in Sector 24, 15 km away from Sangam, by bike, but near Shankar Ghat, she suddenly got off the bike and freed her people from their hands. Pandit Vasudev, who was part of the group and the coordinator of the yatra, has shared this incident. He said that Preeto Devi was very scared after seeing the stampede. She got stressed and disappeared in the crowd of lakhs of people. When she freed her hand and went into the crowd at 11 o'clock on January 29, the funeral pyres had increased. Meanwhile, news of people dying in the stampede was coming in continuously. Tired and frustrated, they got the information that the bodies of the dead people have been kept in the medical college. Disappointed, the group reached there but after identifying six bodies, they got relief that Preeto was not one of them. After this, they kept searching for her and shared photos on social media. The search was started again by promising a reward of Rs 11,000 to a team of local youths. During this, Preeto Devi was found by a group of local youths riding on a bike.

No Dalit in AAP's top leadership, Kejriwal's words are hollow: Rahul

Agencies : Holding a picture of Aam Aadmi Party's 'Team Kejriwal' poster in his hand, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday launched a scathing attack at the Delhi's ruling party, claiming that there is not a single Dalit in the party's top leadership. "See here, this is a picture of Team Kejriwal's top leadership; following names are written here: Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Atishi Singh, Sanjay Singh, Satyendra Jain, Raghav Chaddha, Sandeep Pathak, Saurabh Bhardwaj and Avadh Ojha; show me one name from Dalit, Adivasi, OBC, minority community in the team leadership," Gandhi said. The leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha who was addressing a public rally in Madipur in support of Congress candidates, criticised AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal for "having failed to keep his promise to protect Dalits". "Kejriwal, your words are hollow. You had said that you would protect the Dalits.

Himachal Pradesh: Two teachers from Chamba will receive Dr APJ Abdul Kalam National Teacher Award

Diary Times Desk : Two teachers of Chamba district will be awarded the Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam National Teacher Award in the National Innovative Teacher Award Ceremony organized under the aegis of Shiksha Sagar Sansthan. In which Yudhveer Tandon and Surendra Sharma of Chamba have been selected for this prestigious award. Yudhveer Tandon is serving as a junior basic teacher in the Government Primary School Mouda, which comes under Education Block Sundla. Whereas, Surendra Sharma is teaching in the Tribal Government Primary School Kulal, which comes under Education Block Pangli. A national level committee was formed by the institution in view of the contribution of innovative teachers. Which selected these two teachers from hundreds of applications received from all over the country. They have been selected on the basis of innovations made in the field of education. This honor will be given to these teachers on February 2 in Rajgarh, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. This achievement is a matter of pride not only for the district but for the entire Himachal Pradesh. Two teachers of Chamba district will be awarded with Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam National Teacher Award. Yudhveer Tandon is serving as a junior basic teacher in the Government Primary School Mouda.

SC directs Chennai Collector to process single OCI mother's plea for adoption verification of surrogate twins

Agencies : The Supreme Court has directed the Chennai Collector and District Child Protection Officer to entertain and process a plea filed by a single adoptive OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) mother seeking 'verification' of adoption of her twin adoptive children born to her brother by surrogacy. The petitioner wants to take her twin adoptive children to the UK and the verification by the Collector is needed to enable her to apply for an NOC from the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) – a must for taking the child abroad. "We direct respondent no.3/Collector and respondent no.2 (District Child Protection Unit) to entertain the application to be filed by the petitioner herein with all supporting documents, within a period of one week of from today," a bench led by Justice BV Nagarathna said in its January 29 order. The order came after the petitioners' advocates Anil Malhotra and Ankit Malhotra submitted that the petitioner – a citizen of the UK – adopted the children on January 9, 2020 under the (HAMA), 1956 and wanted to relocate.

Sanjay Awasthy: MLA Sanjay Awasthi said- Instead of making baseless allegations, Jairam should ask for financial help for Himachal

Diary Times Desk : Former acting state president of the state Congress and MLA Sanjay Awasthi has said that Leader of Opposition Jairam Thakur should stop making baseless allegations against the state government and advocate for Himachali interests in the Union Budget. Awasthi said that Jairam Thakur issues a new factless statement every day to remain in the media headlines. If he is so sensitive towards the interests of Himachal and the people of Himachal, then he should demand financial help for Himachal Pradesh in the Union Budget. In a press statement issued on Friday, Sanjay Awasthi said that the central government has not yet released Rs 10,000 crore for relief of losses caused by the natural disaster in the year 2023. Apart from this, about Rs 9,000 crore is lying with the central government in the NPS of the employees. The Leader of Opposition should get this money for Himachal Pradesh from the BJP-led central government. He alleged that Jairam Thakur goes to Delhi and works to obstruct the financial assistance to Himachal Pradesh. Sanjay Awasthi said that the financial burden on the state increased due to the wasteful expenditure of the previous BJP government. That is why the previous BJP government left a legacy of Rs 75,000 crore debt and a financial burden of Rs 10,000 crore in the form of employee liabilities to the present government. Due to the policies of the previous BJP government, today Himachal Pradesh has to take loans to pay back the principal and interest of the loan. 63 percent of the total loan taken by the present state government in the last two years is being spent to pay back the principal and interest of the loan taken by the previous government. The MLA said that the previous BJP government did not take any steps to increase the resources of the state.

Expect Bangladesh to honour MoUs, agreements: India ahead of BSF-BGB meet

Agencies : The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday said it expects Dhaka to honour all mutually agreed MOUs and agreements ahead of the meeting between Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) scheduled to take place in Delhi from February 17 to 20. BSF Director General (DG) Daljit Singh Chaudhary and his counterpart BGB chief Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui will represent their respective sides during the meet scheduled in February. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "The DG-level talks between BSF and BGB are scheduled from February 17 to 20 in New Delhi, during which border-related issues are proposed to be discussed." He added, "We expect all mutually agreed MOUs and agreements to be honoured. These form the basis for structured engagements between the border guarding forces and facilitate the creation of mutually beneficial security and trade infrastructure along the border." During the meeting, India is expected to raise issues, including fencing of border areas, drug and cattle smuggling, trans-border crimes and coordinated patrolling, sources said.



Budget 2025: Need for facilities in Himachal's AIIMS

Bilaspur, hope to get budget for Hamirpur Cancer Institute

Diary Times Desk : The state government has many expectations from the Union budget. The Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda is from Himachal. In such a situation, the people of Himachal are expecting better health facilities from him for Himachal. There is hope of getting budget from the Centre for the state's first cancer institute to be built in Hamirpur. With the help of Indian Council of Medical Research in this institute, the reasons for the increasing cancer patients in the state can be found out. Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu has also met Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda regarding this matter. The state government is preparing a plan to bring this project on the ground soon. The Health Department has handed over the project to the Union Health Ministry. At the same time, there is hope of developing the infrastructure of six medical colleges in the health sector as well as building new colleges. Along with increasing the scope of Bilaspur AIIMS, the people of Himachal have also raised hopes about installing machines. It has been decided to continue the National Health Mission for the next five years. In such a situation, the effect of additional budget for Himachal in NHM can be seen. At the same time, four-lane projects are already underway in Himachal.



Himachal Weather: 83 percent less rain than normal in January, know when will the clouds rain in the state

Diary Times Desk : Due to lack of good rain and snowfall for a long time, a drought-like situation has been prevailing in Himachal Pradesh. From 1 to 31 January, 83 percent less rain than normal has been recorded in the state. 85.3 mm of rain was considered normal for this period but in reality only 14.4 mm of rain was recorded. Bilaspur has received 94 percent less rain than normal, Chamba 88, Hamirpur 94, Kangra 93, Kinnaur 93, Kullu 76, Lahaul-Spiti 73, Mandi 85, Shimla 82, Sirmour 80, Solan 93 and Una has received 95 percent less rain. Due to less rain and snowfall, the concern of farmers, gardeners and tourism businessmen has increased. According to the Meteorological Center Shimla, light to moderate rain and snowfall is forecast at some places in the middle and high mountains on 31 January, 1, 3 and 5 February. While light rain may occur in the lower hilly-plain areas on February 1. There is a forecast of rain and snowfall in many parts of the state on February 4. This change in weather will come due to the activity of western disturbance. The weather is expected to remain clear in the entire state on February 2 and 6. Today the weather remains clear in the capital Shimla.

Decision will be taken soon on land regularization policy in Himachal, 1.65 lakh people had applied

Diary Times Desk : A decision on the 2002 land regularization policy may come soon in the Himachal Pradesh High Court. A division bench of Justice Vivek Singh Thakur and Justice Bipin Chandra Negi has reserved the decision after hearing on January 8. Under the state's regularization policy, the government had sought applications from people who encroached upon government land. More than one lakh sixty five thousand people had applied under this. The then BJP government amended the Land Revenue Act and added Section 163-A, under which it was decided to give 5 to 20 bighas of land to the people and regularize it, so that land could be given to the needy people. Two people challenged the validity of this policy in the High Court. In August 2002, a division bench of two judges had ordered to continue the process, while refusing to give lease. Now the decision will come in this matter after 23 years.

Mahakumbh Stampede: Naresh Chauhan said- stampede in Mahakumbh happened due to mismanagement of UP government

Diary Times Desk : Naresh Chauhan, the chief media advisor to the Chief Minister, has attacked the UP government over the stampede in the Maha Kumbh. He said that people lost their lives due to a stampede in the huge crowd at the royal bath which the BJP is supporting. Whereas the Leader of Opposition Jairam Thakur is talking about the economy being strengthened by bathing in the Maha Kumbh. He said that such a big incident happened due to the mismanagement of the Uttar Pradesh government. If the Uttar Pradesh government did not have the means to make such big arrangements, then what was the need to organize such a big festival on a large scale and call crores of people there. In a press statement issued on Friday, Naresh Chauhan has objected to the statement of Jairam Thakur in which he has attacked the National President of Congress Mallikarjun Kharge and alleged that the Congress is insulting Sanatan. Naresh Chauhan said that this meaningless statement of Jairam Thakur is politically motivated. It seems that he is more interested in remaining in the headlines.

Jairam Thakur: Leader of Opposition Jairam said- Congress violated the Indian Constitution for the benefit of its family

Diary Times Desk : Leader of Opposition Jairam Thakur, while addressing the 'Samvidhan Gaurav Abhiyan' organised at Parwada of Thunag Mandal of Seraj Assembly Constituency, said that the Congress has always violated the Constitution just to protect the interests of the Gandhi Nehru family. Amendments were also made in the Constitution so that late Indira Gandhi, who was the leader of the Congress, did not have to appear before the court. Congress made more than 75 amendments to the Constitution during its tenure. Jairam Thakur said that the leaders of the Congress Party and the Gandhi Nehru family always tried to put themselves above the Constitution. Whenever they wanted, they amended the Constitution as per the Constitution and added things of their own liking to the Constitution so that they could remain in power.

HP Politics: Dhawaala held a meeting with disgruntled BJP workers, said- some people hijacked the party

Diary Times Desk : Ramesh Dhawaala, who was once a firebrand leader of BJP, has become vocal against his own party these days. His statements are indicating turmoil within the politics of Dehra and Jwalamukhi constituencies as well as the state. Two days ago, former minister and OBC leader Ramesh Dhawaala held a secret meeting with a dozen of his special supporters in village Dhawaala. However, this meeting could not remain secret. On Friday also, BJP leader Ramesh Dhawaala held a meeting of angry workers in a private building in Dehra. Angry former office bearers and workers of Dehra and Jwalamukhi constituencies attended this meeting. After the meeting, Ramesh Dhawaala said that some people have hijacked the BJP party. He said that a parallel organization will be set up within a few days. The BJP that was there 15 years ago is not visible today. If the grievances are not resolved on time, anything can happen in the near future. On the other hand, political experts are also considering it a ploy of pressure politics. Because Dhawaala's statements are expressing the pain of neglect.

International Mandi Shivaratri: Traditional Devlu Nati, musical instruments and rangoli competitions will be held in the festival

Diary Times Desk : Traditional Devlu Nati, musical instrument and rangoli competition, drama performance, classical music singing and playing, Bhajan Sandhya, Kavi Sammelan programs will be organized in the International Shivratri Fair to be held from 27 February to 5 March in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. These programs will be organized in Kangnidhar and Paddal Ground through the Department of Language and Culture. Registration of institutions and artists to participate in the programs has been started. This information was given by Deputy Commissioner and Chairman International Shivratri Fair Committee Apurv Devgan. Institutions and artists participating in drama, classical music, drama performance, bhajan evening and rangoli.

Rahul Gandhi slams Arvind Kejriwal, calls him 'cunning' like PM Modi

Agencies : In a stinging attack on AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday said the former Delhi chief minister "lies just like Narendra Modi" but is probably more "cunning" and "sophisticated" than the prime minister. Addressing a public meeting in the Badli constituency in the run-up to the February 5 Assembly polls, Gandhi asserted that he and his party can never compromise with the BJP. "We will die but never compromise with these people." Gandhi also lashed out at Kejriwal over his five-year-old promise of making Yamuna water potable and his press conference on Thursday, saying it reflected his "hollowness". The AAP supremo on Thursday claimed that for the past several days, water with extremely dangerous ammonia levels has been flowing into the Yamuna from Haryana. "When CM Atishi called her Haryana counterpart, urging him to stop sending this toxic water, he did nothing," Kejriwal alleged. At the public meeting of the Congress on Thursday, Gandhi said, "He (Kejriwal) speaks lies one after another just like Modi, there is no difference. There is only one thing, probably Kejriwal is even more 'chalaak (cunning)' than even Modi. So, you must not forget who stands with you, who protects the Constitution and who speaks the truth."

Awami Ittehad Party workers demanding Engineer Rashid's release detained in Srinagar

Agencies : Several Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) workers were detained on Friday as they were sitting on a day-long hunger strike in Srinagar to demand the release of Baramulla Lok Sabha MP and party chief Sheikh Abdul Rashid, alias Engineer Rashid, police said. The AIP workers assembled at the Sangarmal Shopping Complex, where they had decided to hold the hunger strike after the district authorities rejected the party's application for a sit-in near Pratap Park in the Lal Chowk area of the city. The police, who were waiting at the new venue, bundled the AIP workers, including Rashid's son Abrar, into vehicles and detained them at Kothibagh police station. Before being taken away, Abrar told reporters that not allowing his father to attend the Parliament session was murder of democracy. "He has been jailed for five-and-a-half years and he is not allowed to attend Parliament. This is a murder of democracy," he said. The AIP said that the party cadres had planned to sit on a day-long hunger strike in solidarity.

"My Mother Is 78": Priyanka Gandhi Defends Sonia Gandhi Over President Row



Agencies : Amid row over Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's remarks about President Droupadi Murmu after the latter's Parliament address today, Priyanka Gandhi has come to her mother's defence, insisting that the comments were being misinterpreted. The controversy stems from a video clip in which Sonia Gandhi, speaking informally with her children, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, commented on President Murmu's apparent exhaustion following her speech. "The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end... she could hardly speak, poor thing," Sonia Gandhi was heard saying. The remark, interpreted by BJP leaders as derogatory, has triggered the latest flashpoint between the ruling party and the Congress. As the backlash mounted, Priyanka Gandhi said that there was no ill intent behind her mother's words.

A second crush 3km away claimed 7 lives

Agencies : Hours after a stampede killed an estimated 30 people at the nose of the Sangam at the Maha Kumbh, there was another stampede-like situation that led to the deaths of at least seven people, including a child, according to Kalpvasi police station circle officer Rudra Kumar Singh. This incident occurred at Jhusi, along the ghat about three kilometres away from the Sangam nose, Singh said. "Seven people were found dead at the spot at Jhusi due to excessive crowd pressure," the circle officer told HT. Strangely, the state administration chose to remain silent about this incident, even during the briefing on the first stampede at 7pm.

Tell places of Rohingya settlement in Delhi: SC to NGO

Agencies : The Supreme Court on Friday asked an NGO to tell the places of Rohingya settlement in Delhi and the facilities accessible to them. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh asked senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for NGO Rohingya Human Rights Initiative to file an affidavit indicating their places of settlement in Delhi. Gonsalves said the NGO sought access to public schools and hospitals to Rohingya refugees as they were denied the access due to lack of Aadhaar cards. "They are refugees having UNHCR."

7 MLAs Resign From Arvind Kejriwal's AAP: "Lost Faith In You, Party"

Agencies : Seven Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs have resigned just five days before voting in the Delhi election. None of them got tickets to contest the election again. The MLAs who resigned are Naresh Yadav (Mehrauli), Rohit Kumar (Trilokpuri), Rajesh Rishi (Janakpuri), Madan Lal (Kasturba Nagar), Pawan Sharma (Adarsh Nagar), and Bhawna Goud (Palam). BS Joon (Bijwasan) was the first AAP MLA who gave his papers. Palam's Bhavna Goud in her resignation letter directed her disappointment at party chief Arvind Kejriwal. "I have lost faith in you," the MLA said. Naresh Yadav was earlier the Mehrauli candidate. He was convicted by a Punjab court in a Quran desecration case in December and sentenced to two-year jail. When the AAP released its fifth list of candidates for the Delhi election, to be held on February 5, the party announced Mahender Chaudhary as its Mehrauli candidate, replacing Naresh Yadav. Naresh Yadav in his resignation letter.

Delhi's air quality remains 'very poor'; rain expected in early February

Agencies : The air quality in Delhi remained in the 'very poor' category on Friday, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded at 350, according to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR). This marks an improvement from Thursday's AQI of 381. To combat rising pollution, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) reimposed Stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in the national capital. The AQI fluctuates along with the temperature, impacting pollution levels.

Four arrested in Chennai car chase case, police deny any link to DMK

Agencies : Four individuals were arrested in connection with the ongoing investigation into the recent apparent case of men stalking women in a car on the East Coast Road (ECR) in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The police said they identified seven suspects in total, but three were yet to be arrested. The incident garnered significant outrage after the video of a group of men in a car with a DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) flag chasing a car with women inside went viral on social media. The police, led by Tambaram city Deputy Commissioner Karthikeyan, made it clear that the investigation is still in its early stages. "The accused have not mentioned any sexual motives behind the chase. We are looking into the matter neutrally, and the facts are still being gathered," Karthikeyan said. The police also clarified that there was no political link to the case, despite a DMK party flag being displayed on one of the vehicles involved in the chase. "The flag was used to access parking lots and toll booths, and there is no connection to any political party," Karthikeyan added.



Hamas names three more Israeli captives to be freed in Gaza ceasefire swap

Agencies : Israel and Hamas will carry out their fourth prisoners-for-captives swap of the Gaza ceasefire on Saturday with the Palestinian group set to free three Israeli captives in exchange for 90 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. In a statement on Telegram on Friday, the armed wing of Hamas, the Qassam Brigades, named the three captives as Israeli-French citizen Ofer Kalderon, Israeli citizen Yarden Bibas and Israeli-American Keith Siegel. Bibas, 34, is the father of Kfir, who was nine months old when the family was taken by Hamas in October 2023, and Ariel, who was four at the time. There has been no Israeli confirmation on the fates of Kfir, Ariel or their mother, Shiri. But Hamas said in late 2023 that the children and their mother were killed by an Israeli bombardment in the early months of the Gaza war. Siegel, currently in his 50s, was taken captive with his wife, Aviva, who was released by Hamas in the first captives-for-prisoners exchange in November 2023. Kalderon, also in his 50s, was abducted by Hamas with his two children, Erez and Sahar. The children were also released in that first exchange.

US Congress Bans Employees From Installing DeepSeek On Phones, Computers

Agencies : Congressional offices have been issued a warning against utilising DeepSeek, a Chinese chatbot that's been making waves in the American AI market. The rapid evolution of AI technology has posed significant security and administrative challenges for Congress, prompting the House's Chief Administrative Officer to take proactive measures. In a notice obtained by Axios, the Chief Administrative Officer stated that DeepSeek is currently under review and unauthorised for official House use. The notice highlighted the risks associated with DeepSeek, citing instances where "threat actors are already exploiting" the chatbot to deliver malicious software and infect devices. To mitigate these risks, the House has implemented security measures to restrict DeepSeek's functionality on all House-issued devices. Staffers are explicitly prohibited from installing DeepSeek on official phones, computers, and tablets.

Denmark clears Greenland is 'not for sale' amid Trump's interest in acquisition

Agencies : Denmark said on Friday it meant seriously that Greenland is not for sale, after Secretary of State Marco Rubio said U.S. President Donald Trump's interest in acquiring the island was "not a joke". Trump says he will make the autonomous territory of Denmark a part of the United States, and has not ruled out using military or economic power to persuade Denmark to hand it over. Rubio told Sirius XM's The Megyn Kelly Show on Thursday that acquiring Greenland was in the U.S. national interest. Trump had not ruled out military coercion to acquire it so as not to take leverage off the table, he said. "This is not a joke," Rubio said. "This is not about acquiring land for the purpose of acquiring land. This is in our national interest and it needs to be solved." Responding to Rubio's interview, Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said: "I would be more surprised if he had said it was a joke."

"Go Find Another Sucker Nation": Trump Warns BRICS Against Dollar Move



Agencies : US President Donald Trump on Friday issued a warning to BRICS nations, threatening 100 per cent tariffs on their exports if they attempt to replace the US dollar as the dominant currency in international trade. Trump has repeatedly expressed his stance against de-dollarisation, warning that BRICS countries must maintain the US dollar's role in global trade or face economic consequences. "The idea that the BRICS Countries are trying to move away from the Dollar, while we stand by and watch, is OVER," Trump wrote. "We are going to require a commitment from these seemingly hostile Countries that they will neither create a new BRICS Currency, nor back any other Currency to replace the mighty US Dollar or, they will face 100% Tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US Economy. They can go find another sucker Nation. There is no chance that BRICS will replace the US Dollar in International Trade, or anywhere else, and any Country that tries should say hello to Tariffs, and goodbye to America!"

Birthright Citizenship Not For Unqualified People And Unqualified Kids: Trump

Agencies : The debate over birthright citizenship has been rekindled, with President Donald Trump at the forefront. Trump has consistently argued that this provision was originally intended to benefit the children of slaves, not to provide a blanket opportunity for individuals worldwide to claim US citizenship. "Birthright citizenship was, if you look back when this was passed and made, that was meant for the children of slaves. This was not meant for the whole world to come in and pile into the United States of America," Trump made the statement in the Oval Office of the White House. "Everybody coming in, and totally unqualified people with perhaps unqualified children. This wasn't meant for that," he said. Trump emphasised that birthright citizenship was "meant for the children of slaves" and deemed it a "very good and noble" provision.



Hamas Confirms Death Of Military Chief Mohammed Deif

Agencies : The Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, has announced that its military chief, Mohammed Deif, was killed by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip. In a statement on Thursday, Abu Obeida, spokesperson for the brigades, also confirmed that Marwan Issa, Al-Qassam's deputy chief of staff, had been killed, Xinhua news agency reported. "The enemy has assassinated two of our great leaders, but their legacy and resistance will continue," Obeida said. He added that the assassination of Hamas military leaders will not stop the Palestinian resistance against Israel. No additional details were provided. On August 1, 2024, Israel's military claimed that it had killed Deif in an airstrike in southern Gaza's Khan Younis. Israel has accused Deif of being one of the masterminds of the Hamas attack on southern Israeli towns on October 7, 2023. Israel's military said it had killed Deif in July last year, but Hamas had not confirmed this until now. Israel has said that Deif was one of the figures responsible for planning the October 7 attacks in southern Israel in which 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken hostage.

US strike kills senior operative of Al-Qaeda-affiliated militant group in Syria

Agencies : The US military said it killed Muhammad Salah al-Za'bir, senior operative of an Al-Qaeda-affiliated militant group, in an airstrike in northwest Syria on Thursday. The airstrike was part of an ongoing effort to disrupt and degrade militant groups in the region, the US Central Command said in a statement. Muhammad Salah al-Za'bir belonged to the Hurras al-Din group. In an unrelated parallel development, Palestinian militant group Hamas on Thursday confirmed the death of its military leader Mohammed Deif in an Israeli strike, months after the Israel Defense Forces announcement, Times of Israel reported. Hamas spokesman Abu Obeida confirmed the death of Dief in a video statement. Abu Obeida also confirmed the deaths of the deputy commander of Hamas's military wing; Ghazi Abu Tama'a, head of combat support; Raad Thabet, the military wing chief of staff; Rafa'a Salameh, commander of the Khan Younis Brigade; Ayman Nofal, commander of the Central Gaza Brigade; and Ahmed Ghandour, commander of the Northern Gaza Brigade, Times of Israel reported.

Another Punjab farmer dies at Shambhu protest; count reaches 40

Agencies : Another farmer lost his life on Friday at the protest site on the Shambhu border. The deceased has been identified as 65-year-old Pargat Singh, a resident of Kakkar village in Tehsil Lopoke, Amritsar. According to Kisan Mazdoor Morcha chief Sarwan Singh Pandher, the farmer had gone to relieve himself in the morning when he collapsed. Fellow farmers rushed him to the government hospital in Rajpura, where he was declared dead on arrival. Pargat Singh owned two acres of land and is survived by his three children. Pandher stated that over 40 farmers have died so far at both the Khanauri and Shambhu borders. "We do not know how many more farmers will have to sacrifice their lives before the government agrees to our demands. In addition to compensation, we demand the waiver of loans taken by farmers from banks or private financial institutions," said Pandher. As the Kisan Andolan 2.0 marks its first anniversary on February 13, farmers have decided to organise three Kisan Mahapanchayats from February 11 to 13 to commemorate the movement. Farmer leaders Inderjit Singh Kotbuddha, Lakhwinder Singh Aulakh, and Sukhjit Singh Hardeo Jhande announced that these Mahapanchayats will be held under the joint banner of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha.



AAP accuses Congress of betrayal

Agencies : Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema alleged that an unethical alliance was formed between the Congress and the BJP during the Mayor's elections. Cheema said: "We fulfilled our duty, which is why Congress' Deputy Mayor and Senior Deputy Mayor were elected with the votes of our councillors. The Congress has betrayed us. Congress councillors indulged in cross-voting, leading to the victory of the BJP's candidate for the post of Mayor." Cheema further alleged that both the Congress and the BJP are secretly colluding. "They want to stop us. Both parties are scared of the growing influence of AAP. They are even contesting the Delhi Assembly elections together, but this time too, AAP will form the government in Delhi with a massive majority," he added. AAP leader and spokesperson Neel Garg said that Congress councillors indulged in cross-voting, leading to the election of BJP's Mayor. He said the incident had made it completely clear. Both are two sides of the same coin.

4 years on, HC raps state for failing to arrest accused

Agencies : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has warned that the Director-General of Police and the Home Secretary would appear in court at the next hearing to explain the delay in arresting an absconding accused. If the accused is not apprehended by then, despite a lapse of over four years since the FIR was registered, the officers would be required to appear. Justice Namit Kumar noted that the accused remained at large despite multiple rejections of bail applications by higher courts and the initiation of proclamation and attachment proceedings under Sections 82 and 83 of the CrPC. Justice Kumar also took note of an affidavit filed by Ferozpur District Senior Superintendent of Police Saumya Mishra regarding the freezing of three bank accounts and attachment of approximately four acres of land in Ludhiana. The Bench was also informed that hue and cry notices with photographs had been published in newspapers, and regular raids were conducted at his possible hideouts. "Despite persistent efforts by the local jurisdictional police to ensure the arrest of the accused, it is unfortunate that the state machinery is unable to apprehend him, even after four years and four months since the FIR was registered in 2020.

1984 anti-Sikh riots: Delhi court to pronounce verdict in Sajjan Kumar case on February 7

Agencies : A Delhi court on Friday reserved its verdict in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots case against former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in connection with the murder of two persons in the Saraswati Vihar area of the national capital. After hearing additional submissions made by Public Prosecutor Manish Rawat, Special judge Kaveri Baweja said she would pronounce the verdict on February 7. On January 21, the Special Judge had deferred the judgment after the prosecution sought time to further argue on certain points raised by the defence counsel on January 8. Kumar is currently serving a life imprisonment in another anti-Sikh riots case in Tihar Jail. Special Judge Baweja had reserved the verdict after hearing the final arguments in the case related to the killings of Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh on November 1, 1984. The Punjabi Bagh police station registered the case, and the probe was subsequently taken over by a special investigation team. On December 16, 2021, the court framed charges against Kumar, finding a "prima facie" case against him. According to the prosecution, a huge mob, armed with deadly weapons, resorted to large-scale looting, arson.

SKM to stage protest on February 2, provide toll-free passage at Khatkar in Jind

Agencies : The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) Haryana will stage a protest demonstration at the Khatkar toll plaza in Jind district on February 2, allowing vehicles to pass through toll-free. This decision was made to protest against the arbitrary actions of toll companies, which fail to provide proper facilities despite collecting toll charges. SKM Haryana has also demanded the immediate arrest of those involved in the murder of Mohammad Yusuf, who was falsely accused of cow smuggling and killed by cow vigilantes. Additionally, the morcha opposes the arrest of youths involved in the Khedar Thermal protest and the summons issued to farmers in connection with the Kheri Chopta agitation. "The toll companies charge hefty fees but do not provide any facilities. The government, instead of safeguarding public interest, is allowing these companies to exploit people and fill their own pockets," the statement read. The SKM Haryana leaders will also submit memorandums to all Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs on February 8 and 9, urging them to oppose the new agricultural market policy and resolve farmers' pending issues. Representatives of all constituent organizations of the morcha participated in the online meeting. This decision was made to protest against the arbitrary actions.

GBP group's 87 crore property attached by ED in Kharar

Agencies : The Enforcement Directorate, Chandigarh, has provisionally attached immovable properties worth Rs 87.64 crore. These properties, in the form of incomplete flats, shops, and villas, are located at GBP Camellia in Aujla village, Kharar. The action was taken under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA). The properties belong to Gupta Builders and Promoters Pvt. Ltd. (M/s. GBPPL). This action follows the ED's seizure of properties worth Rs 205 crore belonging to the GBP Group in Zirakpur on November 8 of last year. The seized properties included Athens-1 and Athens-2, which belonged to the absconding directors Satish Kumar, Pardeep Kumar, Raman Gupta, and Vinod Gupta of the Gupta Builders and Promoters (GBP) Group. The ED is currently investigating money laundering charges against the real estate firm.



Tributes paid to former minister Sujan Singh Pathania

Diary Times Desk : Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today visited the residence of Vice Chairman of State Planning Board Bhawani Singh Pathania at Manjhar village in Fatehpur Assembly constituency of Kangra district and paid tributes to senior Congress leader and former Minister Sujan Singh Pathania on his fourth death anniversary. The CM recalled the contribution made by late Sujan Singh Pathania in the development of the state. He used to work day and night to solve the problems of the people of Fatehpur region and made a huge contribution to the development that had taken place in this area, he said. Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri, Agriculture Minister Chander Kumar, PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh, Technical Education Minister Rajesh Dharmani, Deputy Speaker Vinay Kumar and MLAs Ashish Butail, Malendra Rajan, Sanjay Ratan, Sudarshan Bablu, Neeraj Nayyar, Rakesh Kalia and Hardeep Singh Bawa, among others, were present on the occasion.

Kangra administration directs officials to hold health sessions in schools

Diary Times Desk : The district administration of Kangra has issued instructions to officials of the Health and Education departments to organise at least four sessions in a month on health and wellness for students in all schools of the district. Issuing the directions, Kangra ADC Vinay Jumar said they should have at least four sessions on health and wellness in each school and a report card of the health of the students should be prepared. This would help provide treatment to the children showing initial symptoms of any disease. The directions were issued to the Chief Medical Officer and HOD of Tanda Medical College to provide treatment to the patients on priority at all government hospitals and the medical college under the National Child Health Programme. Under the National Child Health Programme, children between the age of 0 and 19 were provided free diagnosis.

Una city to Ring Road, to ease traffic congestion: Vikramaditya



Diary Times Desk : Urban Development and PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh today reviewed the infrastructure development of Una city after recently being upgraded to the status of a Municipal Corporation. The minister said a Ring Road would be provided in the periphery of Una city to divert inter-city traffic and to prevent the long distance travellers from entering the city. This would reduce traffic congestion and risk of accidents here. He said the matter has been taken up with the National Highways Authority of India for the construction of a four lane ring road around the city. Vikramaditya also visited the old town hall and discussed the possibilities of renovating it. Vikramaditya Singh said since a new bus stand has been constructed in Una city, the old bus stand, which is lying abandoned, will be put to use for the residents of the city and the matter will be taken up with the Deputy Chief Minister, who also holds charge of the Transport Department. The minister said there are some chronic problems like water drainage in some parts of Una city. The issue had come up during his previous review meeting with district level officers here.

Investors want key issues like infra, connectivity addressed

Diary Times Desk : In a bid to enhance industrial competitiveness in the state, investors expect the Union Budget to address key policy interventions on pressing issues like taxation challenges and infrastructure gaps. Himachal Pradesh CII Chairman Navesh Narula and Vice-Chairman Deepan Garg voiced their concern against the Certain Goods Carried by Road (CGCR) Tax and Additional Goods Tax (AGT), which continue to be levied despite the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). "In industries such as cement and plastics, double taxation has significantly increased operational costs. CGCR is charged twice in cement production, first on clinker and then on the final product. Similarly, AGT on plastic granules results in double taxation of Rs 0.56 per kg, increasing costs for the manufacturers. These taxes are an unnecessary financial burden on industries and should be subsumed under the GST to enhance competitiveness," asserted Navesh Narula. CII also emphasised the need for better infrastructure and connectivity, particularly in a landlocked state like Himachal Pradesh where logistical constraints and recent flood damage have disrupted industrial activities.

Congress following path shown by Bapu: Pratibha

Diary Times Desk : Congress state president Pratibha Singh, Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kuldeep Pathania, Education Minister Rohit Thakur and others paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary at the Ridge and party headquarters here today. The leaders observed a two-minute silence in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue at the Ridge. Speaking on the occasion, Pratibha Singh said everyone needs to move forward with the ideals and ideology of Mahatma Gandhi. "Mahatma Gandhi played a huge role in securing the Independence, and this country can never forget his contribution and sacrifice," said Pratibha Singh. She said the Congress was following the path shown by Bapu. "The best tribute to Bapu would be our resolve to follow the path shown by him," she said. Meanwhile, Pathania said the nation would always remain indebted to Bapu. "There is a great need to promote his thoughts and ideals in the country as we are straying from the path of truth and non-violence shown by him. Gandhi's ideology is the Congress, and we have to strengthen it further," said Pathania.

Apple growers demand GST waiver, increase in import duty

Diary Times Desk : Caught between the erratic weather and skyrocketing input costs, apple growers are hoping for some relief in the upcoming Budget. Claiming that profit margins have shrunk significantly over the past few years due to several factors, the growers are demanding that the GST on farm inputs such as pesticides, fertilizers, machinery, etc., should either be waived off or the lowest GST slab should be applicable to it. "In ideal scenario, the GST should be waived off on farm inputs as the profit margins are shrinking. But if that's not possible, the government should at least apply the lowest GST slab to the horticultural and agricultural inputs. It's a straightforward way in which the government can provide some assistance to us," said Lokinder Bisht, president of the Progressive Growers Association. Harish Chauhan, president of the Fruit, Vegetable and Flowers Growers Association, agrees with Bisht. "Unlike the producers of the industrial products, growers and farmers can't pass on the GST to end consumers and have to bear the entire burden. At a time when the apple economy is passing through a difficult phase, waiving off the GST or reducing it to the minimum would provide big relief to the growers," said Chauhan.



Women's U19 T20 WC: India in final after spin punch floors England



Agencies : A nine-wicket win against England took India to the final of the ICC Women's U-19 T20 World Cup in Kuala Lumpur on Friday and continued their excellent run since winning the U-19 Asia Cup in Malaysia nearly two months ago. India will meet South Africa, who stunned Australia by five wickets, in the final. Both go into the title round unbeaten. With National Cricket Academy chief VVS Laxman and chairperson of the selection committee Neetu David in attendance, India got to the target in 15 overs with G. Kamalini, 16, who was bought by Mumbai Indians for ₹1.6 crore, hitting the winning runs on way to an unbeaten 56 (50 balls). Openers Kamalini and Gongadi Trisha (35 off 29) gave India a good start with a 60-run stand before the latter was bowled by Phoebe Brett in the ninth over. Sania Chalke was unbeaten on 11 when the winning runs were scored. The left-arm spin trio of Parunika Sisodia (3/21), Vaishnavi Sharma (3/23) and Aayushi Shukla (2/21) rattled England. The trio had wreaked havoc in the U-19 Asia Cup also. Delhi's Sisodia dismissed Jemima Spence (0) and Trudy Johnson (9) to put England on then backfoot early.

Sachin Tendulkar To Be Honoured By BCCI's Lifetime Achievement Award

Agencies : The legendary Sachin Tendulkar, whose batting records and impact on international cricket have stood the test of time, will be conferred with the BCCI's Lifetime Achievement Award at the Board's annual gala here on Saturday. The 51-year-old Tendulkar, who played 664 international games for India, holds the record for the highest number of Test and ODI runs in the history of the game. "Yes, he will be the recipient of the C K Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award for the year 2024," a Board source told PTI. Tendulkar's 200 Test and 463 ODI appearances are also the highest by any player in the history of the game. He amassed 15,921 Test runs besides a whopping 18,426 in ODIs. However, he played only one T20 International in his stellar career. In 2023, the lifetime honour was bestowed on former India head coach Ravi Shastri and wicket-keeping great Farokh Engineer.

"Kept Saying Champions Trophy 2025 Stadiums Won't Be Ready...": Pakistan Cricket Board Chief Mohsin Naqvi Attacks India

Agencies : PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Friday sought to allay concerns about the country's preparedness for the upcoming Champions Trophy, stating that the three venues in Lahore, Karachi, and Rawalpindi are ready to host the ODI showpiece on the scheduled dates. The Champions Trophy is set to begin on February 19, and there have been concerns about whether Pakistan will be ready in time for the marquee event, which features the world's top eight teams and will be held for the first time since 2017. While the tournament venues in Karachi and Rawalpindi are still partially under construction or undergoing renovation, the images emerging from those locations have not painted an entirely positive picture. However, a confident Naqvi assured that Pakistan and its venues are prepared to host the ICC event in a fitting manner.

Virat Kohli's off-stump shattered on Ranji Trophy return, out for 6; stunned silence, heartbroken fans leave stadium

Agencies : Virat Kohli's homecoming for Delhi at the Ranji Trophy didn't go as expected, as the Indian batter failed to make a mark in the first innings. The 36-year-old batter was dismissed for just 6 off 15 deliveries, with Railways pacer Himanshu Sangwan sending his stump cartwheeling early in the innings. Kohli had hit a brilliant straight drive for a boundary in the delivery prior to his dismissal, and attempted a similar shot again. However, Sangwan pulled his length and managed to deceive Kohli, casting the Indian batting great to shatter the fans' hopes, who came in huge numbers to watch the batter play. Kohli's dismissal was immediately followed by fans leaving the stadium. Fans thronged the Arun Jaitley Stadium in staggering numbers on the opening day of Delhi's Ranji Trophy clash, drawn by the sheer aura of Virat Kohli. In his trademark style, the Indian superstar engaged with the crowd throughout the day, keeping their excitement alive. The frenzy had reached such heights that supporters had begun queuing outside the venue as early as 3 AM before Day 1, eager for a glimpse of their cricketing idol.

Mitchell Marsh out of Champions Trophy with a back injury

Agencies : Australia will miss the services of Mitchell Marsh at the Champions Trophy 2025 with a back injury ruling the hard-hitting all-rounder out of the eight-team marquee tournament. Australia's selection panel will announce a squad replacement for the 33-year-old in the coming days. Marsh, who has endured a protracted battle with many injuries over his career, complained of back trouble during the recent home Tests against India. He was managed through that series with reduced bowling loads but eventually lost his place to Beau Webster for the final game of the series in Sydney. It is learnt that Marsh experienced a deterioration of symptoms during the course of his rehabilitation programme, forcing the National Selection Panel (NSP) into pulling him out of the Champions Trophy squad. "The National Selection Panel and Australian men's medical team ruled Marsh out of the tournament with the injury which has not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation," a CA release stated. "His lower back pain flared in recent weeks leading the NSP to make the longer term decision for Marsh to complete a more extended period of rehabilitation. Marsh will now undergo a period of further rest and rehabilitation as part of his return to play plan."

Pakistan recall Fakhar Zaman for Champions Trophy

Agencies : Pakistan have recalled opener Fakhar Zaman for their Champions Trophy title defence at home. Announcing the 15-man squad for the tournament that begins on February 19, national selector Asad Shafique also confirmed that either Babar Azam or the recalled Saud Shakeel will open with Zaman in the tournament. Only three players from Pakistan's 2017 title winning campaign have made it to the squad now including Zaman who hammered a memorable century in the final against India. While injury and illness had sidelined him since June 2024, the opener showcased good form in the Champions T20 Cup to earn his spot with Abdullah Shafique getting axed and Saim Ayub sidelined with an injury. Shakeel, who last played an ODI in the 2023 World Cup has been rewarded for his consistent performances in home Tests. Faheem Ashraf and Khushdil Shah have also earned recalls after they delivered with both and ball in domestic competitions recently. Muhammad Irfan Khan and Sufyan Moqim have made way for the duo from Pakistan's last ODI assignment in South Africa. The same squad, led by Mohammad Rizwan, will feature in the tri-series featuring New Zealand and South Africa in the lead up to the mega event.

Australia tighten grip as Sri Lanka lose five

Agencies : Australia's utter dominance on the proceedings in Galle continued on Day 3 as Sri Lanka were five down in the morning session, while still staring at a deficit of 518 runs when rain forced an early Lunch break. The rain didn't relent for long, washing out the middle session. There was hope that the last session could be salvaged, but it was not to be as rain returned once again after allowing for an inspection and a restart time. Sri Lanka were already in a tailspin when Day 3 began, as they started off on 44/3 in response to Australia's gargantuan 654/6. Nathan Lyon nearly had Dinesh Chandimal in the first over of the day, but the outside edge dropped short of Steve Smith at first slip. Mitchell Starc at the other end, beat the outside edge of Kamindu Mendis's bat a couple of times before having him caught behind down the leg side off a full angled-in delivery in his next over. Dhananjaya de Silva and Chandimal fought it out in the next 12 overs, pushing Sri Lanka past 100 runs. But right after drinks, the former threw his wicket away by giving Matthew Kuhnemann the charge.