

## MAMTA BANERJEE

### 'BENGAL ELECTIONS WILL BE MRITYU KUMBH FOR YOU': HINDU MONK'S WARNING FOR MAMATA BANERJEE OVER KUMBH REMARK

**Diary Times Desk :** In a sharp political retort, the Akhil Bhartiya Sant Samiti chief on Tuesday issued a stern warning to West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee over her controversial 'mrityu kumbh' remark on the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela of Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj. Mamata Banerjee, while speaking in the West Bengal Assembly, had referred to the sacred Hindu event as a "Mrityu Kumbh."

Mamata Banerjee's remark snowballed into a massive row sparking significant backlash, especially from the BJP and religious groups. Condemning Mamata Banerjee's remark on Maha Kumbh, Akhil Bhartiya Sant Samiti chief Swami Jitendranand Saraswati warned her that the upcoming West Bengal elections will prove to be a 'Mrityu Kumbh' for her political ambitions.

"The way Hindus of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and I should say Eastern India has been coming here for the 'Amrit snan', it is natural for you to be restless. I feel that the upcoming assembly elections of West Bengal will prove to be a 'Mrityu Kumbh' for your political career," Swami Jitendranand Saraswati was quoted as saying by ANI.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee slammed the central government and BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government over the alleged mismanagement at Maha Kumbh Mela, underway in UP's Prayagraj. "I respect Maha Kumbh, I respect the holy Ganga Maa. But there is no planning. How many people have been recovered? For the rich, the VIP, there are systems available to get camps [tents] for as high as ₹1 lakh. For the poor, there are no arrangements at Kumbh," Mamata said.

"Stampede situation is common in a 'mela' but it is important to make arrangements. What planning did you make?" she added attacking the CM Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government. Banerjee's comments were made in the context of the recent stampede that took place in Prayagraj during the amrit snan on the occasion of Mauni-Amavasya. The timing of Mamata's remarks could not be more significant, as West Bengal is due for assembly elections next year.



## TESLA IN INDIA

### TESLA BEGINS HIRING IN INDIA, SENDS SIGNAL OF ENTERING EV MARKET



**Diary Times Desk :** American electric carmaker Tesla has opened recruitments for various roles in India, including business operations analyst and customer support specialist, in what could be a precursor for the company's entry into the country.

As per the job postings on the company's website, the posts are for the 'Mumbai Suburban' area. These roles include service advisor, parts advisor, service technician, service manager, sales & customer support, store manager, sales & customer support, business operations analyst, customer support supervisor, customer support specialist, delivery operations specialist, order operations specialist, inside sales advisor, and consumer engagement manager.

A mailed query to confirm if the recruitments are part of the company's plans to enter the Indian market and the possible timeline for starting sales in India remained unanswered. The hiring by Tesla in India comes close after the recent meeting of company founder and American tech billionaire Elon Musk with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the latter's recent US visit. Tesla's possible entry into the Indian market has been keenly awaited.

Last April, company founder and American tech billionaire Elon Musk had postponed his proposed visit to India at the last minute citing "very heavy Tesla obligations" but the proposed visit had raised expectations of Musk announcing plans for the way forward for selling Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest.

His planned visit to India came weeks after the government announced a new electric vehicle policy under which import duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of USD 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like Tesla. An advisor representing Tesla -- The Asia Group (TAG) had even attended a stakeholders' meeting on the new EV policy along with those from Vietnam's EV maker VinFast and all the major manufacturers in India, including Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata, Mahindra, Kia, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, Renault, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi.

Musk had said in 2022 that Tesla, which was earlier seeking a reduction in import duties to sell its vehicles in India, would not manufacture its products unless it is allowed to first sell and service its cars in the country.

**SMRITI IRANI'S USAID LINK: CONGRESS TAKES 'RASODE MEIN KAUN THA' DIG AT BJP**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Congress on Tuesday took a "rasode mein kaun tha" dig at BJP over former union minister Smriti Irani's old link to a programme purportedly funded by USAID, which has fallen on bad days in the US. "Smriti Irani was the country's first representative at the Monte Carlo TV festival and was also appointed as goodwill ambassador to India by USAID for the WHO-ORS programme for three years," Congress leader and Priyank Kharge posted on X, along with an old government press statement corroborating the claim. "Interesting. According to the Government's official website, Ms Smriti Irani's bio states that she has served as the USAID 'Goodwill Ambassador' to India. Does this imply BJP politicians are real agents of George Soros?" said Kharge, adding that the campaign got USAID funds. BJP has been accusing the Congress of a nexus between the US hedge fund tycoon Soros and Sonia Gandhi, a charge the Congress has been denying. Associating with the attack, AICC media department chief Pawan Khera took a swipe at BJP, which has been accusing the erstwhile Congress-led UPA of accepting USAID funding. "This is brilliant. We finally have the answer to BJP's favourite question — Rasode mein kaun tha?" said Khera attacking Irani.



**UPSC FURTHER EXTENDS LAST DATE TO APPLY FOR CIVIL SERVICES PRELIMS EXAM**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has extended the last date to apply for this year's civil services preliminary examination till February 21. This is the second extension in the deadline to apply for the examination, conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages -- preliminary, mains and interview -- to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Foreign Service and Indian Police Service, among others. The last date for submission for Civil Services (Preliminary)-2025 and Indian Forest Service (Preliminary)-2025 "has been further extended till February 21 (6 pm)," said a notice put out by the Commission on its website. Further, a correction window will also be open for the applicants "from February 22 to February 28", read the notice, without mentioning any reasons behind the second extension. The Commission had recently also introduced certain changes in its online application system for the exam.

**PIYUSH GOYAL DOWNPLAYS US TARIFFS FEARS, ASKS INDUSTRY TO BE BOLD, COMPETITIVE**



**Diary Times Desk :** In first remarks since US President Donald Trump threatened India with reciprocal tariffs, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday that the situation presented an opportunity for India to be more competitive and produce quality products, to the mutual benefit of both India and the US. "We collaborate for human good. I personally think we will have a good and even better relationship with the US, and the bottom line is that this is an opportunity for India to expand trade with the US," Goyal said at a local conclave. He said the two nations had set a target to expand bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030. "We look at this opportunity as a way to make India more competitive, fish out quality products, look at mutual concessions, and attractive trading conditions that will support growth in the US and India for the shared prosperity of the two nations," he said, adding that there can be no better negotiator than Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**KHARGE SLAMS 'VISIONLESS' MODI GOVT, BLAMES IT FOR ECONOMIC DOWNTURN**

**Diary Times Desk :** Kharge slams 'visionless' Modi govt, blames it for economic downturn New Delhi, Feb 18 (PTI) Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday termed as ironical the claim of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that the Indian economy is giving good returns, and said a "visionless" Modi government has tanked the economy and ruined the lives of Indians. "Nothing can be more ironical than Modi Sarkar's FM saying that our Economy is delivering 'Good Returns', he said in a post on X. Kharge said Rs 45 lakh crore has been wiped out from the Indian stock markets so far in 2025 and Nifty 50 firms have shown the worst quarterly profit growth in five years. "Foreign Investors have sold over Rs 1.56 lakh crore of stocks since October last year, including nearly Rs 1 lakh crore in 2025 itself, which has led to wiping out wealth of small and medium investors," the Congress chief said. "Rupee at 87, means Trade Deficit is sky-high. Imports have risen by 62.21 percent in the last 5 years. The Modi Government's Trade policy is disastrous for India," he said.



**YOUR HOROSCOPE**  
 19-02-2025

<p><b>Aries</b>                  Today, you will meet old friends, which will refresh old memories. Employed people may be fired from the job due to heavy arguments with colleagues in the workplace. People doing business should thank God for getting financial benefits from the advice of their spouse. Due to irritation in the eyes, you should consult an ophthalmologist.</p>	<p><b>Taurus</b>                  Today you will get success as your long pending legal proceedings will come in your favor. There will be an atmosphere of happiness in the family as employed people will get progress in their workplace. People doing business should make a budget and spend the money in order to get financial benefits. Housewives should change their food according to health and season.</p>
<p><b>Gemini</b>                  Today you should include yoga and meditation in your daily routine. For employed people, your responsibilities may increase due to promotion in the workplace. People doing business may suffer financial loss from any unknown person today. There may be difficulty in walking due to nerve pain problems.</p>	<p><b>Cancer</b>                  Today you will get relief from all your problems due to sudden financial gain. Employed people may have to get scolded by their boss due to being hasty in the workplace. People doing business may face increased difficulties in business due to arguments with business partners. As the problem of foot pain increases, you must consult a specialist doctor.</p>
<p><b>Leo</b>                  Today, you should offer water to Lord Shiva to avoid difficulties. A heated argument with HR in the workplace will spoil your whole day. Businessmen have to exercise patience, there are chances of improvement in business. Today, you may face stomach and pancreas problems due to eating too much fried food.</p>	<p><b>Virgo</b>                  Today you should take special control over your speech and behavior. People in employment will get success in the workplace with the help of friends. People doing business will get financial gain due to some special offer, your financial condition will be strengthened. Old diseases of elders in the house may emerge.</p>
<p><b>Libra</b>                  Today is going to be a busy day for you. Employed people will get a chance to work with senior officers due to advancement in their professional field. People doing business should avoid exchanging money with any unknown person today. Pregnant women may have to face problems due to changing weather.</p>	<p><b>Scorpio</b>                  Today you may have to face huge arguments in your family over small matters. Employed people may have to face mental problems due to extra workload in the workplace. People doing business may have to travel abroad in connection with business expansion. Diabetic patients should get themselves checked by a doctor in case of any problem today.</p>
<p><b>Sagittarius</b>                  Today you should take all important decisions of your career thoughtfully. Employed people may have to face some problems due to the start of a new job in the workplace. Due to financial gain for business people, you can invest in a new business. Problems like leg pain and headache may bother you.</p>	<p><b>Capricorn</b>                  Today you can invest especially in land and buildings. Employed people may have to travel long distances due to office work, due to which your health may deteriorate. People doing business may face difficulties in repaying business loans due to loss of money. High BP and cholesterol problems will increase the problems of your spouse.</p>
<p><b>Aquarius</b>                  Today you may have to face huge arguments in your family over small matters. Employees will be suspended due to indiscipline in the workplace. People doing business should solve all the problems of their customers in time. Due to worsening weather, problems related to cold and cough may increase in the family.</p>	<p><b>Pisces</b>                  Today your interest in creative work will especially increase. Employed people may be given an important project by their boss to handle important projects in the workplace. People doing business should control their speech and behavior with their customers. You should walk carefully on the road, problems may arise due to injury.</p>





## Himachal : Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla said- only coordination with the center will open the way for development in Himachal

**Diary Times Desk :** Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla said that only coordination between the Himachal government and the central government can open the way for development here. Regarding Himachal government not helping in the disaster, he said that the assessment of the central team and the assessment of the statement given by the state government were different. If there is any such thing, then the state government should go to New Delhi and talk to the central government. The center will not ignore Himachal. If there is any misunderstanding, then it should be resolved by sitting together. It will not be enough just by saying. He said that the ministers of the state should talk to the central ministers in the context of their departments. Shukla said - If I am also needed somewhere, then I will also talk. On Tuesday, on completion of two years of his tenure, Shukla held a press conference after launching a copy table book at the Raj Bhavan. Shukla said that he can say that Himachal Pradesh has been given a lot of money in the budget from the Center. The state government should focus on its contribution. More than two hundred and fifty crores have come in the budget.



## Himachal News: Golden Jubilee Scholarship Examination on March 2, 324 centers set up; 17,000 students will participate

**Diary Times Desk :** The first phase of the Golden Jubilee Scholarship Scheme exam will be held on March 2 in Himachal. About 17,000 students studying in class 5 in government schools of the state will appear for the scholarship exam. 324 centers have been set up across the state by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Solan for the exam. Admit cards can be downloaded from the SCERT Solan website from February 20. The Golden Jubilee Scholarship Exam is conducted in two phases. The first phase screening exam will be held on March 2. Only students who pass this exam can participate in the second phase exam. 100 students coming in the merit will be provided scholarship for three years. In this, four students of class VI, five students of class VII and six thousand rupees per month will be provided scholarship to students of class VIII. The scheme has been started to identify and nurture talent at the initial level for students studying in class V.

## Himachal: Union Minister of State for Railways Bittu said- Himachal government is not giving 660 crores, that is why the projects are pending

**Diary Times Desk :** Union Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing Industries Ravneet Singh Bittu said that within 6 months, panoramic vistadome train service will be started between Kalka and Shimla. Panoramic coaches have been made in the Kapurthala Rail Coach Factory of Railways. The work is stalled due to non-receipt of Himachal Pradesh's share for the expansion of railway projects. The Center is investing Rs 2,716 crore to strengthen railway connectivity in Himachal. The total cost of four major rail projects of Himachal is Rs 13,168 crore. Bilaspur-Leh, Chandigarh-Manali-Leh are included in the priority of the central government. The Himachal government is not releasing its share of Rs 660 crore, due to which the projects are stuck. If the state cannot give its share of the amount.

## Water Vision-2047: Mukesh Agnihotri said- Rs 2,000 crore should be given for incomplete drinking water schemes in Jal Jeevan Mission

**Diary Times Desk :** Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri raised the demand of releasing Rs 2000 crore for about 1000 incomplete drinking water schemes in Jal Jeevan Mission at the second All India State Water Ministers Conference in Udaipur, Rajasthan. In his address during the conference, Mukesh advocated for making a special policy for hill states and also suggested finding new options to save the depleting water sources due to change in weather cycle. Mukesh Agnihotri also demanded Rs 1269.29 crore for snow and water conservation by Himachal and funding from the central government to implement a detailed project prepared for 'recharging groundwater' through about 2000 dry and defunct hand pumps and tube wells. He also urged to approve PMKSY-Har Khet Ko Pani and new surface minor irrigation and medium irrigation projects proposed in PMKSY and AIBP pending for central approval. The Deputy Chief Minister said that 65% of the state comes under forest area which is under the jurisdiction of the Centre, due to which the availability of land for development projects has become limited.

## Himachal CM: Chief Minister Sukhu said- Police stations will be classified into six categories to improve law and order

**Diary Times Desk :** In compliance with the guidelines of Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu, the state government has decided to classify all the 135 police stations of the state into six categories. The decision to classify police stations has been taken keeping in view factors such as population, geographical area, criminal activities, VIP movement, traffic system, inter-state borders and tourist inflow. The aim of this initiative is to enhance service delivery, improve law and order and strengthen public safety. Police stations have been classified into a total of six categories from A Plus to E on the basis of the number of annual crime registrations. Police stations registering more than 250 cases per year have been placed in the A Plus category and 15 such police stations have been identified in the state. Apart from this, 5 police stations have been identified in A category, 25 in B category, 47 in C category, 28 in D category and 15 in E category. Classification of police stations has also been determined keeping in view the number of police personnel.

## Himachal: UG practical exams will be held in colleges from March 1, university released the schedule

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal Pradesh University (HPU) has released the schedule of practical examinations for graduation degree courses. Practical examinations of BA, BSc and BCom will be conducted at the college level between March 1 and 15. Colleges will conduct examinations at their level keeping in view the availability of examiners along with lab facilities. Necessary guidelines have been issued by the university for all the affiliated colleges regarding the conduct of examinations. About one lakh students studying UG in colleges affiliated to Himachal University will appear in the annual examinations expected from March 20. Before this, students will have to give practical examinations. According to the instructions issued regarding practical examinations, examinations will have to be conducted by March 15 at any cost.

## Shimla: Vehicles bringing tourists will now have to keep bags for garbage, household survey will be done through SHG

**Diary Times Desk :** It will now be mandatory for tourists visiting Hills Queen Shimla to keep garbage bags in their vehicles. To keep the capital clean, the Municipal Corporation is going to implement this new system soon. For this, it has decided to call a meeting with the taxi and transport union. According to the Municipal Corporation, garbage is being collected daily from the houses of about 66 thousand people in the city. But despite this, heaps of garbage are being collected on the hilly areas, drains and roadsides of the city. Most of the garbage is being thrown by people coming from outside. Thousands of tourists reach Shimla in private vehicles as well as travellers, taxis and buses. On the way and on reaching Shimla, they throw the garbage of food items in the open. This is spreading dirt. In the meeting to be held with the union, instructions will be issued to keep separate bags for garbage in all vehicles. The drivers will make the tourists aware to keep the garbage in it. On reaching Shimla, places will be marked to throw the garbage collected in the bag.

## New Delhi station stampede a tragedy of lessons not learnt

**Diary Times Desk :** Lucknow railway station in 2002, New Delhi 2004, Allahabad 2013 and, more recently, Mumbai's Elphinstone Road station in 2017. If Indian Railways learned anything from these stampedes, which killed over 60 people on its premises, those lessons were not visible on February 15 at New Delhi railway station, where thousands of passengers—most of them Prayagraj Mahakumbh pilgrims—were waiting for trains. What followed was not uncommon in railway history. People were waiting for the Prayagraj Express, a regular train. In came a special (temporary) train, the Prayagraj Special, on another platform. The railways has maintained there was no sudden announcement for this new train's arrival and neither was its platform changed. But an on-duty Railway Protection Force inspector has given a statement to the two-member inquiry committee that the special train's platform was changed, leading to the rush—something the railways has as good as denied. "A committee has been formed to investigate the matter and the protocol is to seek eyewitness accounts and reports from all staff at the station, such as inspectors and officers. After this, the report will be submitted by the committee to the zonal railway," said a Railway Board spokesperson.

## BJP To Launch Campaign On 3-Language Policy From March 1 In Tamil Nadu

**Diary Times Desk :** The BJP in Tamil Nadu has decided to push for the three-language policy with a door-to-door campaign, escalating the ongoing row over what the ruling DMK has called the "imposition" of Hindi. The campaign will begin from March 1, the BJP has said, asserting that the DMK's opposition to the Centre's three-language policy is a direct violation of the Constitutional principles. The Centre's three-language policy has never been accepted in Tamil Nadu since the days of former Chief Minister CN Annadurai. The state has been following a two-language policy, teaching Tamil and English in schools. But the matter escalated as Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan made it clear that Tamil Nadu will not receive funds under the Samagra Shiksha scheme unless it fully implements the National Education Policy 2020. The minister alleged that the opposition to the policy - which includes three languages -- was politically motivated.

## "Midnight Decision Disrespectful": Rahul Gandhi Note On Poll Chief Selection



**Diary Times Desk :** Congress MP Rahul Gandhi has slammed the centre's 'midnight decision' to appoint Gyanesh Kumar as the next Chief Election Commissioner, calling his nomination a 'violation of the Supreme Court order (by) removing the Chief Justice of India from the selection committee'. Mr Gandhi, part of that three-member panel, as are Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, had last night objected to picking a new CEC at this time, pointing out a challenge to the law governing his/her selection is to be heard by the Supreme Court this week. The Congress leader had shared a dissent note, which he posted on X today. However, sources later told NDTV the centre planned to press on regardless, since halting the process would mean leaving the key post vacant. Hours later Mr Kumar was named as the new CEC, replacing Rajiv Kumar. And, this morning Mr Gandhi went on the warpath. "During the meeting of the committee to select the next (Chief) Election Commissioner, I presented a dissent note to the PM and HM that stated.

## President Murmu grants prosecution sanction against AAP's Satyendar Jain in ED probe

**Diary Times Desk :** President Droupadi Murmu has granted prosecution sanctions against Aam Aadmi Party leader Satyendar Jain in the Enforcement Directorate probe. Satyendar Jain was booked by the ED in a money-laundering case linked to alleged hawala dealings and was arrested in May 2022. Last week, the ministry of home affairs (MHA) had requested the President to grant prosecution sanctions against the former Delhi minister. The MHA sought the sanction against Satyendar Jain, 60, under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita. The request for sanction was made based on an ED investigation and the presence of "adequate evidence", unnamed officials earlier told news agency PTI. Currently, out on bail, Jain has been chargesheeted by the ED. The money-laundering case stems from an August 2017 FIR filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against Jain and others.

## Prayagraj water fails bathing standards during Maha Kumbh

**Diary Times Desk :** The quality of water at the confluence of river Ganga and Yamuna at Prayagraj, at the ongoing Maha Kumbh, is failing to meet the primary standards for bathing. The water has high levels of faecal coliform, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday (February 17). A CPCB report dated February 3 mentioned that faecal coliform levels at all monitored locations were above the permissible limit of 2,500 units per 100 ml, indicating significant sewage contamination. The issue is particularly concerning as millions of devotees take ritual baths at the Sangam, especially on auspicious days, increasing bacterial concentrations in the water. The findings were reviewed by an NGT bench comprising Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Judicial Member Justice Sudhir Agarwal, and Expert Member A Senthil Vel. The tribunal is overseeing efforts to prevent sewage discharge into the rivers, ensuring water quality remains suitable for bathing.



## Indian Embassy's Message To Nepali Students After KIIT Student Death

**Diary Times Desk :** The Indian Embassy in Nepal assured thorough investigation into the alleged suicide of a Nepal woman student at Odisha's Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), urging them to return to the campus. Prakriti Lamsal, a third-year B Tech student of the Bhubaneswar-based institute, died allegedly by suicide at her hostel on Sunday. The incident triggered protests on the campus, where around 1,000 Nepali students study. Students shouted slogans, blocked roads and pushed through the gates of buildings. A male student has been taken into custody. A group of Nepalese students also staged a demonstration in front of the Indian embassy in Kathmandu with placards demanding a probe into the incident. The embassy said that KIIT has appealed to Nepali students to "return to the campus, resume their classes, and stay in the hostels". "Nepali students studying in India form an important facet of the enduring people.

## "This Is 'Mrityu' Kumbh...": Mamata Banerjee's Scathing Attack On Stampede

**Diary Times Desk :** The fallout of last month's Maha Kumbh stampede rumbled on Tuesday with Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee slamming rivals BJP - in power in that state and at the centre - for failing, even now, to recover the bodies of all 30 people who were killed. "This is the 'Mrityu' (death) Kumbh... I respect the Maha Kumbh, and I respect Ganga maa... but there is no planning. How many people's bodies have been recovered?" she asked. "For the rich, the VIPs... there are systems available to get tents after paying as much as Rs 1 lakh. But for the poor, there are no arrangements made. A stampede situation can happen in large public gatherings, yes. But it is important to make arrangements. What planning did you (the BJP) make?" the Trinamool Congress chief thundered in the Bengal Assembly. Last week too Ms Banerjee took the UP government to task, saying authorities had still not released an accurate.



## "About Ukraine, Without Ukraine": Zelensky Slams US-Russia Talks

**Diary Times Desk :** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday criticised talks between US and Russian officials in Saudi Arabia as talks about the war in Ukraine without Ukrainian participation. Talks "are taking place between representatives of Russia and representatives of the United States of America. About Ukraine -- about Ukraine again -- and without Ukraine," Zelensky said during an official visit to Turkey.

## Pope Francis To Remain Hospitalised As Doctors Treat Complex Infection: Vatican



**Diary Times Desk :** Doctors have changed treatment for Pope Francis' respiratory tract infection to tackle a "complex clinical situation," and he will remain in hospital for as long as necessary, the Vatican said on Monday. The 88-year-old pontiff has been suffering from a respiratory infection for more than a week and was admitted to Rome's Gemelli Hospital on Friday. The results of the tests carried out in recent days and today have demonstrated a polymicrobial infection of the respiratory tract, which has led to a further modification of the therapy," said a brief statement. All tests conducted up to today are indicative of a complex clinical situation that will require an appropriate hospital stay," it said. In an evening update, the Vatican reported that Pope Francis remains in a "stable" condition with no fever. Despite being hospitalized, the pope has continued to make calls to Gaza's only Catholic parish, according to a local priest in the enclave. He has previously stated that he has maintained regular contact with the parish since the war in Israel and Gaza began in October 2023, Reuters reported.

## Using DeepSeek is a 'personal choice,' UK govt says amid South Korea ban: Report

**Diary Times Desk :** Downloading the Chinese Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot DeepSeek is a "personal choice" for the public, the UK government has said, according to a report by British news agency PA Media. This comes at a time when South Korea became the latest country to limit access to the new AI app due to privacy concerns. New downloads of the app have been paused in the country. The UK government has however said that it is keeping new technologies under constant review. When DeepSeek was released earlier this year, it completely shook the AI world as it claimed to offer similar performance to established Silicon Valley giants such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, but for a fraction of the developmental costs. However, the company's Chinese origins and the fact that it stores data on servers in China has raised privacy and security concerns around the world due to fears of the Chinese government possibly using the data for surveillance or intelligence.



## US, Russia To Name Teams To Negotiate "Ending Conflict In Ukraine"



**Diary Times Desk :** Washington said Russia and the United States will name teams to negotiate a path to ending the war in Ukraine as soon as possible, as the superpowers met on Tuesday in Saudi Arabia without Kyiv or the EU. However, no specifics on a possible meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin emerged from the gathering in Riyadh, the first high-level official Washington-Moscow talks since Ukraine's 2022 invasion. Some European leaders, alarmed by Trump's overhaul of US policy on Russia, fear Washington will make serious concessions to Moscow and re-write the continent's security arrangement in a Cold War-style deal between superpowers. On Tuesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed to "appoint respective high-level teams to begin working on a path to ending the conflict in Ukraine as soon as possible", the State Department said.

## Putin Ready To Hold Talks With Ukraine's Zelensky "If Necessary": Kremlin

**Diary Times Desk :** Russian President Vladimir Putin has agreed to hold talks with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky "if necessary", the Kremlin has confirmed. The announcement came as top Russian and US diplomats are holding a meeting in Saudi Arabia today with an aim to find an agreement to end the years-long war in Ukraine. Strangely, today's Russia-US meeting in Saudi Arabia, with the Ukraine war high on the agenda, has no seat for Ukrainian diplomats. President Zelensky has said that "Kyiv cannot recognise any agreements or things discussed about us without us." President Zelensky will be visiting Saudi Arabia too - but a day after the crucial meeting between top diplomats from Russia and the United States. President Zelensky's spokesperson Sergiy Nykyforov has said that he will not be meeting any officials either.

## Costa Rica To Take Indian, Central Asian Deportees From US, They'll Later Be Sent To...

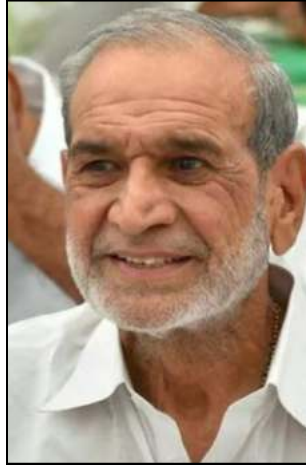
**Diary Times Desk :** Following in the footsteps of Panama and Guatemala, Costa Rica also announced on Monday it was willing to receive illegal migrants deported from the United States, who are nationals of other countries. The Central American nation's presidential office said in a statement that 200 migrants from central Asia and India would be arriving in a commercial flight from the US on Wednesday. "The Government of Costa Rica agreed to collaborate with the United States in the repatriation of 200 illegal immigrants to their country," the Costa Rican president's office said in a statement, adding that "these are people originating from... Central Asia and India." The first set of US deportees will reach Costa Rica on Wednesday aboard a commercial flight, whereupon they will be transported to a Temporary Migrant Care Center near the border with Panama. The migrants will then be moved to the countries of their origin. Costa Rica specified that "the process will be completely financed" by the US government under the supervision of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Costa Rica is the third country in Central America to collaborate on repatriating deported migrants from the United States since President Donald Trump assumed office in Washington on January 20. Panama and Guatemala had previously agreed to a similar arrangement when US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited on a recent tour of Latin America.

## "Sometimes It Looks Like...": Nadir Godrej On Trump's Tariffs, India Impact

**Diary Times Desk :** Much of the headlines from Donald Trump's second term as US President has been around deportation and tariffs, with India feeling the pinch on both counts. Over 300 Indians living illegally in that country have been flown back - shackled - on American military aircraft, so far. And then there are the tariffs. The impact of tariffs on India - 25 per cent on steel and aluminium, and the reciprocal tariffs announced last week, hours before Trump met Prime Minister Narendra Modi - will play out over the next weeks. But the effect may not be too bad, Godrej Industries' Managing Director, Nadir Godrej, told NDTV. Speaking at an NDTV Profit event, Mr Godrej pointed to the US President's apparent tactic.

## 1984 anti-Sikh riots: Prosecution demands death penalty for Sajjan Kumar in Saraswati Vihar father-son murder case

**Diary Times Desk** : The prosecution on Tuesday demanded the death penalty for former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar – guilty of murder of a father-son duo in Saraswati Vihar area of the national capital during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots case. Terming it a rarest of rare case, Additional Public Prosecutor Manish Rawat said the convict deserved to be awarded the death penalty. Rawat has filed his written submissions. The lawyer for victims also sought the capital punishment for Kumar who is already serving life imprisonment in another anti-Sikh riots related case. Asking the convict and the victims to file their written submissions, Special Judge Kaveri Baweja posted the matter for arguments on quantum of sentence on February 21. The defence counsel couldn't appear because of lawyers' strike. While convicting Kumar, Baweja had on February 12 said, "In the light of... the evidence on record considered in its totality, I am of the opinion that Prosecution has been able to prove its case against the Accused beyond reasonable doubt." Besides murder, Kumar has also been convicted of rioting, dacoity, attempting to cause death or grievous hurt, committing culpable homicide and burning the victim's house as a member of an unlawful assembly.



## Political chaos in Karnal as Congress leaders defect to BJP

**Diary Times Desk** : A political storm has hit Karnal as several top Congress leaders announced their decision to quit the party and join BJP. The leaders, including former Haryana Minority Commission Chairman Tarlochan Singh, Ashok Khurana, Nittu Mann, and former Karnal MC chairperson Balwinder Kalra, are set to formally join BJP in the presence of Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini this evening. The Congress leaders cited their dissatisfaction with the party's decision to field former Deputy Mayor Manoj Wadhwa as the candidate for the mayoral post as the primary reason for their resignation. In a last-ditch effort to retain them, Manoj Wadhwa, along with other leaders like Congress youth president Divyanshu Budhiraja, Parag Gaba, and Nischey Sohi, visited the leaders' residences to persuade them to reconsider their decision. However, the disgruntled leaders remain resolute in their decision to leave the Congress and join BJP. "I have announced my decision to quit the Congress and join BJP," said Tarlochan Singh. "I am thankful to the party leadership for the opportunities I received, but I am joining BJP to better serve my people."

## Municipal Corporation nod to temporary water connections outside lal dora

**Diary Times Desk** : The Municipal Corporation (MC) has decided to provide temporary water connections with no ownership rights to people living outside the lal dora in 22 villages of the city. Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla put up the agenda in this regard at the MC House meeting. She assured the House that she would get it approved from the UT Administration. The Mayor had taken up the issue at the Administrator's Advisory Council meeting held earlier this month under the chairmanship of UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria. She said there were 2,563 households outside lal dora, which had power supply connection. Now, they will get temporary water connections with no ownership rights and the MC would get a revenue of nearly Rs 3 crore annually, she added. "These residents are dependent on water tankers, despite having been provided electricity connections. The decision will benefit more than 1 lakh people. I will take up the matter with the UT Administration and ask it to take a decision in this regard at the earliest," said Babla.

## House okays Rs 2,114 cr outlay for next fiscal

**Diary Times Desk** : The Municipal Corporation (MC) today passed Rs 2,114 crore budget for the financial year 2025-26. The civic body faces a significant financial challenge with the UT Administration allocating only Rs 625 crore to it from the Central Budget announced on February 1. With the hope of getting additional funds from the Centre, as recommended by the 4th Delhi Finance Commission (DFC), the MC budget lists Rs 1,704 crore in grants expected from the Centre, Rs 9 lakh from electricity duty, and Rs 410 crore projected from the internal revenue sources such as property tax and water bills. Highlighting her efforts to address the financial crisis, BJP Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla said, "I have initiated talks to ensure that the MC gets its share under the DFC recommendations. Additional revenue plans include auctioning residential.

## PSEB sets up 2,579 exam centres to conduct Class 8, 10, 12 exams

**Diary Times Desk** : The Punjab School Education Board (PSEB) has set up 2,579 centres to conduct its annual board examinations for Classes 8, 10, and 12, where over 8.82 lakh students are expected to appear. Punjab School Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains on Tuesday announced the exam schedule. He said that the Class 8 board exams will begin on Wednesday (February 19), followed by the Class 12 exams on February 24. Similarly, the Class 10 examinations are scheduled to commence in March, Bains added. He further said that a total of 3,02,189 students of Class 8 will appear for the exam, while 2,84,658 students will appear for the Class 10 exam and 9,877 students will sit for the Matric open exam. A total of 2,72,105 senior secondary pupils will appear in the 12 class board exam and 13,363 students are set to appear in the senior secondary open exam. Harjot informed that a total of 2,579 examination centres have been set up across the state for the board exams and 2,579 superintendents and 3,269 Deputy Superintendents have been assigned to ensure the smooth and fair conduct of the exams. A control room (0172-5227136, 137,138) has also been set up at the head office to oversee the board examinations.

## Amritpal moves high court seeking directions to allow him to attend Lok Sabha

**Diary Times Desk** : Punjab MP Amritpal Singh has moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court, seeking directions to the Union of India, the state of Punjab and other respondents to allow him to attend parliamentary proceedings. In his petition, the MP contended that his attendance was required in compliance with the summons issued by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and asserted that his absence violated his constitutional rights. MP from Khadoor Sahib and the head of Waris Punjab De, Amritpal is currently confined in Dibrugarh central jail under the provisions of the National Security Act. The petitioner alleged that he was being deliberately prevented from attending Parliament with the malicious intent of leaving his constituency, Khadoor Sahib, unrepresented and eventually having his seat declared vacant. He submitted that his absence beyond 60 days would result in the seat being declared vacant, affecting not just him but nearly 19 lakh constituents of his seat. He also sought directions for authorities to permit him to meet officials and ministers regarding the implementation of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme, which allows MPs to recommend development projects based on locally identified needs.

## Immigration agent booked for cheating and fraud in Jhajjar

**Diary Times Desk** : Local police in Jhajjar have booked an immigration agent, Ravi alias Monti, on charges of cheating, fraud, and criminal breach of trust. The agent, from Basana village, was accused by Deepak Ruhil of Rohad village of taking Rs 53 lakh to facilitate his travel to the USA. Deepak, who was recently deported from the USA, alleged that Ravi arranged for him to travel via multiple countries, including Dubai, Istanbul, Madrid, El Salvador, and Mexico. Deepak departed from Delhi airport on December 19, 2024, and reached the USA on January 29. However, upon arrival, he was arrested by USA authorities and sent to a detention camp. After being sent back to India, Deepak attempted to contact Ravi, but the agent denied recognising him. Deepak then filed a complaint with local police, prompting an investigation. Ravi has been booked under relevant sections of the Immigration Act, and the police are investigating the matter further. The agent, from Basana village, was accused by Deepak Ruhil of Rohad village of taking Rs 53 lakh to facilitate his travel to the USA.



## HIMACHAL PRADESH GUV ISSUES NOTIFICATION FOR BUDGET SESSION

**Diary Times Desk :** The Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla issued a notification on Tuesday convening the budget session of the Vidhan Sabha, beginning March 10. The notification was issued on the recommendation of the cabinet. The budget session will consist of 15 sittings and will commence with the Governor's address on March 10. The Vidhan Sabha also issued a notification for the budget session. Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kuldeep Pathania stated today that with the issuance of the formal notification, legislators can now begin filing their questions to be raised during the session. The Chief Minister will present the budget for 2025-26 on March 17," he said. "March 22 and 27 have been designated as Private Members Days, during which MLAs can raise public issues concerning their constituencies."

## 45% OF HIMACHAL PRADESH PRONE TO LANDSLIDES, FLOODS AND AVALANCHES

**Diary Times Desk :** A recent study conducted by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Ropar, has revealed that 45 per cent of Himachal Pradesh is prone to landslides, floods, and avalanches, sparking concerns among state authorities and climate activists. These findings were released after a team of scientists completed hazard susceptibility mapping of the state. The detailed analyses and testing were part of the efforts made by researchers and scientists from multiple IITs to study multi-hazard vulnerability across the Himalayan states. The main aim of the study was to identify regions at high risk from multiple natural hazards like flash floods, avalanches, and earthquakes occurring simultaneously. Experts working on this subject believe that the study would help formulate strong disaster risk management and reduction strategies in the hill state. These findings were also presented by IIT, Ropar, at the Indian Cryosphere Meet (ICM) held at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, last week, which was attended by 80 glaciologists, researchers, scientists, and other experts from around the world.

## UK NATIONAL DIES, ANOTHER RESCUED AFTER TREKKING ACCIDENT IN DHAULADHAR MOUNTAINS

**Diary Times Desk :** A rescue operation was conducted by the State Disaster Management Authority in the Dhauladhar mountain ranges, resulting in the rescue of one UK national, Robert John, and the recovery of the body of another UK national, Howard Thomas Harry. According to SP SDRF Arit Sen, on February 16, around 6 pm, Control Room HP SDRF Kangra Unit received information from the Kangra administration regarding the rescue of two injured tourists, both UK nationals, who were trekking near Thathri, Khaniyara, Tehsil Dharamsala. A rescue team of 10 personnel was deployed at 6.30 pm, and they began their trek from Thathri Power Project. After reaching Dritto Café, they were informed that the victims were located 4 km further uphill in extremely difficult terrain. After four hours of trekking, the team located the victims at 10.30 pm, with one trekker in a critical condition. They secured the critical trekker onto a stretcher and began the challenging descent, along with his co-trekker. The rough terrain and repeated crossings of a rivulet made progress extremely.



## ORANGE ALERT FOR HEAVY SNOW, RAIN IN HIMACHAL ON FEB 20

**Diary Times Desk :** The weather department has issued an orange alert for heavy snow and rain in four districts of the state on February 20. According to the forecast, widespread rain and snow accompanied by thunderstorm, lightning are "very likely" over the state from February 19 midnight to February 21 morning. During this period, isolated spells of heavy rain/snow are "very likely" in some places in the districts of Chamba, Kangra, Kullu and Mandi. Besides, light snow is likely at many places, with a few spells of moderate snow, in the districts of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur and over the higher reaches of Kangra, Chamba, Shimla, Kullu, Mandi, Sirmour and Kullu districts from the midnight of February 20 till the morning of February 21. A few spells of light snow, with one or two moderate spells, are "very likely" over most tourist destinations, including Kufri, Narkanda, Manali, Solang Valley, Dalhousie, Sissu and adjoining areas. A few spells of light rain/ snow over Shimla town and adjoining areas are likely on February 20. According to the forecast, widespread rain and snow accompanied by thunderstorm, lightning are 'very likely' over the state from February 19 midnight to February 21 morning. The weather department has issued an orange alert for heavy snow and rain in four districts.

## 4-YEAR-OLD CHILD DIES WAITING FOR TREATMENT AT BADDI CIVIL HOSPITAL

**Diary Times Desk :** A four-year-old child passed away while waiting for medical treatment at Baddi Civil Hospital here. The child, who had been suffering from cough for two days, was rushed to the hospital by his father, Bipan Kumar, around 2.45 am. According to Kumar, the doctor on night duty did not examine the child and instead told him to rest the child as he was under sedation. The doctor allegedly instructed Kumar to return in the morning. Kumar claimed that he had given his child 5 ml of cough syrup before taking him to the hospital. He stated that the doctor did not examine the child and instead asked him to wait until morning. After waiting for several hours, Kumar noticed that his child had become unconscious. He then took an auto-rickshaw and began searching for a taxi to take his child to PGI Chandigarh. A taxi driver, Rakesh Kumar, eventually rushed them to the hospital, but the doctors pronounced the child dead. Kumar, a resident of Jharmajri in Baddi, has demanded action against the doctor for negligence. The hospital administration has launched an investigation into the incident. The senior medical officer, Dr Mahavir Chauhan, has denied.

## HARYANA RESIDENT BOOKED FOR PURCHASING FAKE BA AND LLB DEGREES

**Diary Times Desk :** A Kalka resident, Mahesh Sharma (34), has been served a notice by the Dharampur police for availing fake BA and LLB degrees from Manav Bharti University at Lado village near Sultanpur in Solan. Sharma had enrolled himself with the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana High Court using these fake degrees. The police action comes after a complaint was lodged by Sunil Dutt, a resident of Kalka, on January 20, 2024. Dutt alleged that Sharma had obtained fake degrees from Manav Bharti University, which was already booked for cheating, forgery, and criminal conspiracy in 2020. According to the investigation, Sharma obtained a BA degree from Manav Bharti University during the academic session 2010-13, although the university did not offer the course until 2014. Sharma then obtained an LLB degree from the same university using the fake BA degree. "The accused had obtained an LLB degree from Manav Bharti University on the basis of this fake BA graduation degree and got himself registered in the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana High Court," said SP Solan, Gaurav Singh. The police have registered a case of cheating and forgery against Sharma and have bound him under Section 35(3) of the BNSS to appear before them. Further investigation is underway.



## BCCI backtracks on Champions Trophy travel policy; allows Indian players' wives, families to watch one game in Dubai

**Diary Times Desk :** In the wake of a series loss in Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, BCCI announced a strict travel policy, which was reportedly set to be implemented during the Champions Trophy. Based on the rule, families won't accompany the Indian cricket players in Dubai during the ICC tournament. However, the latest report in Dainik Jagran revealed that BCCI has permitted all players' families to go to Dubai to watch only one match. The Indian team will begin their Champions Trophy campaign on Thursday at the Dubai International Stadium against Bangladesh. They will then take on defending champions Pakistan on Sunday and New Zealand the following week. Even if India make the final, the entire tournament will last three weeks, hence, BCCI did not allow families to accompany the players on the tour. According to the policy statement: "Players absent from India for more than 45 days during overseas tours can be joined by their partners and children (under 18) for one visit per series (format wise) of up to a two-week period."



## Azharuddeen's unbeaten 149 gives Kerala advantage on Day 2

**Diary Times Desk :** Mohammed Azharuddeen (149\*) dug in to produce a dogged century to give Kerala the advantage against Gujarat on yet another slow-moving day in Ahmedabad. The wicket-keeper batter's patient century combined with steady support from the lower middle order meant that Kerala finished the second day at 418 for 7. The day started on a positive note for Gujarat as Kerala skipper Sachin Baby (69) fell off just the second ball of the day without adding to his overnight score. The southpaw edged a late outswinger from Arzan Nagwaswalla to be caught at first slip. With the second new ball still quite new, the hosts would have wanted to make further inroads into the Kerala line-up. However, the in-form Salman Nizar (52) then got stuck in, grinding Gujarat's bowlers down with his temperament. He faced 202 deliveries in his knock and also combined for a significant 149-run stand with Azharuddeen. Any movement that the second new ball offered died down rather quickly on a slow pitch where neither quick-scoring was easy nor wicket-taking. It then boiled down to the patience battle between batters and bowlers. Azharuddeen found more support in Ahammed Imran (24) as the pair added 40 more runs. During these two partnerships.

## Vidarbha in command despite Dube's five-fer

**Diary Times Desk :** Vidarbha continued to dominate proceedings on Day 2 of the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Mumbai in Nagpur. The hosts have picked up seven Mumbai wickets, led by Parth Rekhade's three-wicket haul, and still lead by 195 runs at Stumps. Akash Anand (67\*) has been the pillar with the bat for Mumbai but has had limited support from his teammates so far. In an inspirational bowling performance for Mumbai, Shivam Dube registered figures of 5 for 49. Vidarbha continued from their overnight score of 308 for 5, as Yash Rathod quickly brought up his 50. Shardul Thakur broke the 63-run partnership between Rathod and Akshay Wadkar, dismissing the former by holding onto one of his own bowling. Wadkar punished Shardul in his next over with three boundaries for overpitching as it looked like another long day was in store for Mumbai in the field. However, Royston Dias had the Vidarbha captain, Wadkar, caught behind as the door was left ajar for the Mumbai bowlers. It was then Dube's turn to clean up the tail with three wickets across his three-over spell to restrict Vidarbha below 400. Mumbai picked up the last five wickets for just 75 runs in the first hour on Day 2. Mumbai were cagey at the start of the innings.

## Shardul Thakur signs for Essex, to play County Championship after IPL 2025 snub

**Diary Times Desk :** Out-of-favour all-rounder Shardul Thakur has signed for Essex and will play in the 2025 County Championship season in England. Essex announced the signing on Tuesday, 18 February, while Shardul was in action for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Vidarbha. Shardul will make his debut in the County Championship, England's premier first-class tournament, featuring for Essex in the first seven matches of the season. The County Championship is set to begin on 4 April, less than two weeks after the start of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 on 22 March. Despite going unsold in the IPL mega auction, Shardul has been in outstanding form in the Ranji Trophy, delivering with both bat and ball for defending champions Mumbai. "I am feeling excited to join Essex this summer," Shardul Thakur said. The County Championship contract comes at a crucial time for Shardul, who has steadily caught the attention of selectors ahead of India's tour of England, beginning in June. India are set to play a five-Test series in England across June, July, and August.

## India will miss accuracy and calm of Jasprit Bumrah in Champions Trophy: Shikhar Dhawan

**Diary Times Desk :** India will miss the accuracy and calm of Jasprit Bumrah in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, said Shikhar Dhawan, a day before the start of the tournament. The star fast bowler has been out of action since the conclusion of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in January 2025. Bumrah copped a back injury while bowling in the final Test match of the series and since then has not played a single match of cricket at any level. Speaking to the ICC right ahead of the tournament, Dhawan said not having Jasprit Bumrah was the only concern for an otherwise star-studded Indian team. Jasprit Bumrah has been sensational over the last two years since his return from back injury in mid-2023. Bumrah was absolutely sensational in the ODI World Cup 2023, where India reached the final of the tournament with a dominating run at home. After a heartbreaking final, Bumrah took matters into his own hands, and dished out a masterclass in the 2024 T20 World Cup, where he picked up 15 wickets at a ridiculous average of 8.26. He was named the player of the tournament after India won.

## Jamieson replaces Ferguson in New Zealand's Champions Trophy squad

**Diary Times Desk :** New Zealand have lost their most experienced fast bowler to injury with Lockie Ferguson ruled out of the Champions Trophy 2025. Ferguson, who has played 65 ODIs, including the last two World Cups where his team reached the final four, suffered a hamstring injury while playing in the International League T20 (ILT20) tournament in the UAE earlier this month. Kyle Jamieson has taken his place in the 15-member squad who are slated to kick off the ICC event on Wednesday with a game against hosts Pakistan in Karachi. Ferguson picked up the injury at the start of February when he left the field without completing his full quota of four overs for the Desert Vipers. He did not play their two remaining matches of the season and was on the sidelines during the ODI tri-series that followed in Pakistan. Ferguson tested his hamstring out on Sunday, bowling three overs in a warm-up game against Afghanistan. On Tuesday, he was ruled out of the Champions Trophy.

