

HAPPY HOLI

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**NIRMALA
SITHARAMAN**

"PROMOTES SECESSIONIST SENTIMENTS": N SITHARAMAN SLAMS DMK AMID RUPEE ROW

Diary Times Desk : Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has hit back at Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK over its move to replace the rupee symbol with the Tamil letter (Ru), declaring that it "promotes secessionist sentiments under the pretence of regional pride " and is a "completely avoidable example of language and regional chauvinism". She also questioned why the DMK had not made its reservations known earlier.

The state had replaced the Devnagari rupee symbol (Re) in promotional material for the state budget which will be presented Friday morning, making a point amid the blazing row over what it calls "imposition of Hindi".

Result -- since morning, the party has drawn massive political backlash from the BJP. State BJP chief K Annamalai, pointing out that rupee symbol accepted by the nation has been drawn dram by the son of a former DMK MLA, tagged the state's ruling party "stupid".

In the evening, the finance minister weighed in with a lengthy post on X. Accusing the DMK of "utterly disregarding the creative contribution of a Tamil youth", she said, "All elected representatives and authorities are sworn under the Constitution to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of our nation. Removing a national symbol like '₹' from the State Budget documents goes against that very oath, weakening the commitment to national unity. This is more than mere symbolism - it signals a dangerous mindset that weakens Indian unity and promotes secessionist sentiments under the pretence of regional pride. A completely avoidable example of language and regional chauvinism".



**SANJAY
NISHAD**

'LEAVE THE COUNTRY': UP MINISTER SANJAY NISHAD SLAMS DETRACTORS OF HOLI



Diary Times Desk : Uttar Pradesh cabinet minister and NISHAD Party chief Sanjay Nishad on Thursday said that those who have a problem with Holi colours "should leave the country". At a 'Holi Milan' event in Gorakhpur, Nishad alleged that some opposition leaders were trying to create divisions in society.

"People embrace each other during Friday prayers, and they do the same while celebrating Holi. Both are festivals of togetherness, yet some politicians don't want this unity. A certain section is being misled by poisoning their minds, and they, too, are citizens of this country. If they have issues with colours, they shouldn't just stay indoors...they should leave the country," PTI quoted the minister as saying.

"They colour fabrics, paint their houses, and wear vibrant clothes. If they truly had an issue with colours, how would they engage in these activities?" he asked. "Some claim that applying colours harms their faith, yet they wear colourful clothes without hesitation. The biggest traders of colours belong to this very community," he added.

On March 10, a BJP MLA in Bihar stirred controversy over his "appeal" to Muslims, urging them to stay indoors during Holi. I want to appeal to Muslims there are 52 jummas (Fridays) in a year. The one this week coincides with Holi. So, they should let Hindus celebrate the festival and not take offence if colours are smeared on them. If they have such a problem, they should stay indoors. This is essential for maintaining communal harmony," Haribhushan Thakur Bachaul, the MLA from Bisfi assembly constituency in Madhubani district, said. "They have always had double standards. They are happy to make money by setting up stalls selling abir-gulaal (coloured powders), but if a few stains land on their clothes, they start fearing dozakh (hell)," he added.

**TAMIL NADU REPLACES RUPEE SYMBOL IN BUDGET LOGO
 AMID LANGUAGE ROW WITH CENTRE**

Diary Times Desk : Amid a fierce language tussle with the Centre, the Tamil Nadu government has replaced the Devanagari rupee symbol with a Tamil letter in its logo for the budget 2025-26, which will be tabled in the state Assembly on Friday. Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu is scheduled to table the budget on Friday. The logo for the budget, released by the government on Thursday, carried 'ru,' the first letter of the Tamil word 'Rubai,' which denotes the Indian currency in the vernacular language. The logo also had the caption "everything for all," indicating what the ruling DMK claims is its inclusive governance model. While the move drew the ire of the BJP, the ruling DMK wondered if any rule barred such a depiction. Slamming the Stalin government's move, BJP TN chief K Annamalai asked the chief minister how stupid he could be to do it. The DMK Government's State Budget for 2025-26 replaces the Rupee Symbol designed by a Tamilian, which was adopted by the whole of Bharat and incorporated into our Currency."

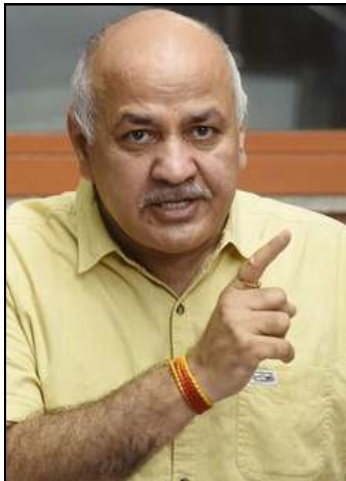


**17 NAXALITES, INCLUDING NINE WITH
 RS 24 LAKH BOUNTY, SURRENDER IN
 CHHATTISGARH'S BIJAPUR**

Diary Times Desk : Seventeen Naxalites, nine of them collectively carrying a cash reward of Rs 24 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Thursday, a senior police official said. The cadres, including a couple, turned themselves in before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials here, he said. The Naxalites cited disappointment with the "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology, exploitation of innocent tribals by senior cadres and increasing influence of security forces, Bijapur Senior Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said. They were also impressed with the 'Niya Nellanar' (your good village) scheme under which security forces and administration have been striving to provide basic amenities and carry out development works in interior areas, he said. All the surrendered Naxalites were active in different capacities in the Gangaloor area committee of the outlawed Maoist organisation.

**PRESIDENT APPROVES FILING OF FIR AGAINST SISODIA,
 SATYENDAR JAIN IN CLASSROOMS 'SCAM'**

Diary Times Desk : President Droupadi Murmu has given her approval for the registration of an FIR against AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain in an alleged scam of Rs 1,300 crore in the construction of classrooms in Delhi government schools, sources said. In 2022, the Delhi government's vigilance directorate recommended a probe into the alleged scam and submitted a report to the chief secretary. The President has given her approval for registering the FIR against Sisodia and Jain in connection with the alleged scam during their tenure as ministers in the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government, sources said. The Central Vigilance Commission, in a report dated February 17, 2020, highlighted "glaring irregularities" in the construction of over 2,400 classrooms in Delhi government schools by the Public Works Department.



**BIHAR MLA BOOKED FOR SINGING RAUNCHY
 BHOJPURI SONGS WITH DOUBLE-MEANING**



Diary Times Desk : The police have registered an FIR against JD(U) MLA Narendra Kumar Niraj alias Gopal Mandal for allegedly singing Bhojpuri songs with a double meaning at a programme in Bihar's Bhagalpur district, officials said on Thursday. In a purported video which has gone viral, Mandal was seen belting out Bhojpuri numbers with double entendre at the function organised ahead of the Holi celebration. The multiple-term JD(U) legislator from the Gopalpur assembly seat was also seen pasting a currency note on the cheek of a dancer at the event on March 10. However, the authenticity of the video could not be verified. The Naugachia police under the Bhagalpur division registered a case on March 12 based on a report submitted by SI Surendra Singh, officials said. Despite repeated attempts, neither the SP of the Naugachia police district nor the MLA was available for comments on the FIR. Mandal was in the news a few years ago when he moved around in his undergarments on board a Rajdhani Express. The Bihar police recently ordered a crackdown on bawdy Bhojpuri songs, calling these a "burning social problem" that "imperilled women's security" besides having a "pervasive effect on the psyche of children".

YOUR HOROSCOPE
 14-03-2025

<p>Aries 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>Taurus 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>Gemini 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>Cancer 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>Leo 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>Virgo 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>Libra 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>Scorpio 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>Sagittarius 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>Capricorn 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>Aquarius 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>Pisces 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 PRADESH: CM SUKHU SAID- THERE WILL BE AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IRREGULARITIES IN THE HIMCARE SCHEME, THERE WILL ALSO BE AN AUDIT

Diary Times Desk : There will be an investigation into the irregularities in the Himcare scheme in Himachal. The previous government has spent Rs 800 crore under the scheme, the government will get it audited. The report will also be placed in the House. Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu said this in response to the discussions going on for three days by the MLAs in the House on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address. He said that the BJP government has looted the wealth of Himachal, we will not let it be looted. The money of temples will not be spent on schemes. The BJP itself has changed the law. It is good to invest the money of temples on cattle, but this money was also spent on schemes i.e. roads, water etc. Angry with the Chief Minister's harsh reply and talk of looting of wealth, the opposition first created a ruckus in the House and then walked out. Earlier, Leader of Opposition Jairam Thakur said that along with investigating how many people were treated in private hospitals, give information. We have nothing to do with any hospital. Patients are dying due to not getting medicines. The Chief Minister said that the previous BJP government looted the wealth of the state to gain political advantage so that it could come back to power. Rs 350 crore was looted from private hospitals in the name of Himcare.



HIMACHAL ASSEMBLY SESSION: POLITICAL ARROWS WERE FIRED BETWEEN THE RULING PARTY AND THE OPPOSITION IN THE HOUSE REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF NEW MINISTERS

Diary Times Desk : During the assembly session on Thursday, there was a lot of political exchange between the ruling party and the opposition over the appointment of new ministers. During the discussion on the Governor's address, BJP MLA Bikram Singh said - Kewal Singh Pathania is my good friend, he thinks the Chief Minister will make him a minister. Kewal Bhai, he does not want to make you a minister, stop flattering him, you have an old stamp on you. On this, Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania also quipped - you have already become one, what else do you want to become. On this, the Chief Minister said - Bikram ji, you stop worrying, who to make a minister and who not, it is my prerogative. You see the condition of your party, it is divided into 5 factions. It is possible that tomorrow you become the Chief Minister or Satti becomes the Chief Minister. The contender for the post of Chief Minister should talk on facts. Keep the documents related to the allegations you are making in the House. Bikram Singh said - What is to happen in our party is our matter. You take care of your people. You are going to be ruined. Pointing towards the MLAs of the ruling party, he said - These people punch us to speak. The poor guys are not able to speak themselves.

HIMACHAL NEWS: INTER-STATE GANG BUSTED, 7 SMUGGLERS ARRESTED WITH CHITTA, ACTION ALSO TAKEN IN KUMARSAIN

Diary Times Desk : Taking major action against Chitta smugglers, police has arrested seven people including three smugglers from Punjab in Hatkoti and Kumarsain. In the Hatkoti case, an interstate Chitta smuggler gang has been busted. This gang used to bring Chitta from Punjab and supply it in Rohru. More arrests can be made in this case. It is being ascertained who is the kingpin of the gang. In both the cases, police has recovered 282 grams of Chitta. Police has started investigation by registering a case under various sections of NDPS Act. The first case has come under Hatkoti police station. Here, on the basis of information, police stopped a Honda Cruise car with Punjab number near Parhat bridge near Hatkoti for search. During this, 252 grams of Chitta was recovered from the car during the search of the vehicle. In this case, police has arrested Rajkumar, Jagdish and Jatindra resident of Mohan K Hithar, Tehsil Guru Harsai District.

ECONOMIC SURVEY: HIMACHAL PRADESH TOPS NEIGHBORING STATES IN PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 5.4 IN 2023-24

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh has been better than the average of neighbouring states and India in providing employment. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, the labour force participation rate (LFPR) of all ages has been 60.5 for Himachal Pradesh, 46.2 for Uttarakhand, 43.7 for Punjab, 37.4 for Haryana and 45.1 percent in India. For women, this rate has been ahead of these states and the whole of India except Uttarakhand. It has been more than double. This survey has been conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization and the National Statistical Office. This disclosure has been made in the Himachal Pradesh Economic Survey 2024-25. It was tabled in the House. According to this survey, in the year 2023-24, the worker population ratio in all age groups is 57.2 in Himachal Pradesh, 44.2 in Uttarakhand, 41.3 in Punjab, 36.1 in Haryana and better than the average of 43.7 in the whole of India. The survey results show that women in Himachal Pradesh are participating more actively in economic activities than their counterparts in the all-India level at 51.8 per cent and in neighbouring states.

HP ECONOMIC SURVEY: GRAIN PRODUCTION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH DECREASED BY 8.47 PERCENT

Diary Times Desk : In Himachal Pradesh, the production of paddy and wheat has decreased in the last one year, while the production of millet and gram has increased. This information has come to light in the Economic Survey 2024-25 placed in the House during the Assembly session on Thursday. The production of grains in the state has decreased by 8.47 percent as compared to last year. The production of paddy in the state has decreased by about 6.39 percent as compared to last year. Maize production has increased by 3.33 percent. The production of ragi has decreased by 6.25 percent. The production of small grains and millet has increased by 76.15 percent. The production of wheat has decreased by 19.76 percent. The production of barley has also decreased by 2.34 percent. The production of gram has increased the most by 94.74 percent. The production of potatoes in the state has fallen by 0.05 percent in the last one year. However, the production of vegetables has increased.

HIMACHAL ASSEMBLY SESSION: WILL GIVE STATE LEVEL STATUS TO CHINTAPURNI MATA FAIR, OBJECTION TO KANDAHAR'S STATEMENT

Diary Times Desk : Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said that Chintapurni Mata fair will be given state level status. A proposal to name Amb railway station after the temple will be sent to the central government. He said that selfie points will also be built there. A master plan is being prepared to beautify all the big temples of the state. Responding to the question of MLAs Kewal Singh Pathania and Sudarshan Bablu, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the department has no shortage of budget. The temples of the state will also be beautified on the lines of the big temples of the country. Under the Prasad Yojana, a DPR of Rs 56.67 crore has been sent to the central government in December for the development of Maa Chintapurni temple. Under Swadesh Yojana 2, a DPR has been prepared and sent to the Government of India to develop the Pong Dam in Kangra district from the tourism point of view. Agriculture Minister Chandra Kumar said that 50 percent subsidy is being given to farmers and gardeners of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe.

HOLI 2025: GULAL FLEW A LOT ON SERI STAGE IN MANDI RANGOTSAV, HOLI WAS ALSO CELEBRATED IN KULLU, YOUTH DANCED TO THE TUNE OF DJ

Diary Times Desk : This time, a unique confluence of traditional and modern colors was seen in the grand Holi festival organized as 'Rangotsav Mandi 2025' in Chhoti Kashi of Himachal Pradesh. This festival was jointly organized by educationist Dharmendra Rana, young businessman Deep Kapoor and social worker Monika Thakur at Seri Chanani ground. During this, there was a shower of colors on the tunes of DJ and the youth enjoyed the festival with enthusiasm and gaiety. During this, a lot of abir-gulal was thrown. The police administration had made tight arrangements to ensure that there is no chaos during the Rangotsav. The city residents participated in the festival from 10:00 am to 2 pm by dancing to Hindi, Punjabi, Pahari songs. People of all age groups, from children to children, participated in this Rangotsav with great enthusiasm.

SIDDARAMAIAH REQUESTS DK SHIVAKUMAR TO ATTEND 'ANTI-DELIMITATION' MEETING IN CHENNAI

Diary Times Desk : Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday extended support to the DMK-led opposition against the proposed delimitation of Parliamentary constituencies and requested his Deputy, DK Shivakumar, to attend the meeting in Chennai to discuss the issue. In a letter to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, Siddaramaiah stated that he would be unable to attend the meeting due to prior commitments. "I have received your letter dated March 7, which raises crucial issues regarding the autonomy of states, with serious implications for the principles governing our polity. In particular, the issue of delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies based on new population benchmarks needs to be discussed at length by like-minded states. Although I would like to participate in the meeting, due to my prior commitments, I am unable to do so," he wrote in the letter dated March 13. However, acknowledging the importance of the meeting scheduled for March 22, the Chief Minister stated, "I have requested Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar to participate in the deliberations."

BRITISH WOMAN ALLEGEDLY RAPED IN DELHI HOTEL BY MAN SHE MET ON INSTAGRAM

Diary Times Desk : A British citizen, who came to Delhi to meet a man she befriended on Instagram, was raped by him at a Mahipalpur hotel. The police have arrested the accused, Kailash, in a rape case and his friend, Wasim, has been charged with molesting the UK tourist. Police have said the woman had come to India for a holiday in Maharashtra and Goa. She called Kailash from there and asked him to join her. Kailash said he could not travel and asked her to come to Delhi. The woman reached Delhi on Tuesday and lodged at a hotel in Mahipalpur. She then called Kailash and he reached the hotel with his friend Wasim. He allegedly raped her that night. The next morning, the woman approached the Vasant Kunj police station and registered a complaint. As per guidelines, police have informed the British High Commission about the incident and they are assisting the UK national too. Kailash, it is learnt, works at a private firm. The woman has told police that he struggled to speak English and used Google Translate to communicate with her. Police have said the British woman had come to India for a holiday in Maharashtra and Goa.

"DESIGNED BY TAMILIAN": K ANNAMALAI'S "STUPID" BARB AT DMK AMID RUPEE ROW



Diary Times Desk : Hitting back at the DMK for replacing the rupee symbol in promotional material for the Tamil Nadu budget with the Tamil letter 'Ru', BJP state President K Annamalai has said the party is so "stupid" that it doesn't realise that the symbol was designed by the son of its former MLA. The DMK, which is led by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, has countered this by saying that it is not against the rupee sign but is seeking to promote and prioritise the Tamil language. D Udaya Kumar, who has a Master's in Visual Communication as well as a PhD from the Industrial Design Centre of IIT Bombay, won a national contest in 2009 to design the symbol for the rupee, which was adopted in 2010. Mr Kumar had said at the time that he used a mix of Devanagari 'Ra' for rupiah and the Roman 'R' and blended them to arrive at the symbol to ensure it has a universal appeal while staying true to Indian traditions and culture. The Devanagiri script is used to write Sanskrit, Hindi, Prakrit, Marathi, Konkani and Nepali.

'THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME': RANYA RAO REVEALS SHE LEARNT HOW TO SMUGGLE GOLD FROM YOUTUBE

Diary Times Desk : Kannada actress Ranya Rao's alleged involvement in a gold smuggling case has taken a significant turn as she was intercepted by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) upon her arrival from Dubai to Bengaluru. Rao was found in possession of gold bars weighing 14.2 kg, valued at ₹12.56 crore. During subsequent investigations, searches at her residence revealed additional gold jewellery worth ₹2.06 crore and Indian currency amounting to ₹2.67 crore. Ranya Rao, who admitted to smuggling gold for the first time, reportedly learnt the techniques required for concealing gold from YouTube. She stated, "This was the first time I smuggled gold from Dubai to Bengaluru," claiming no prior experience in similar activities. Despite the confession, she allegedly did not cooperate fully during her three-day DRI custody. The Special Court for Economic Offences recently reserved her bail plea till Friday.

INDIA DEPORTED MORE NIGERIANS THAN BANGLADESHIS IN 2024

Diary Times Desk : It's not just the United States which has ramped up deportations of illegal migrants; a Moneycontrol analysis shows that the Indian government has done the same in FY24. The number of foreigners deported from India rose to 2,331 in FY24, compared with 1,580 in 2019 and 1,731 in 2018, according to reports from the Ministry of Home Affairs and a government reply in Parliament. Deportations could rise with the passage of the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025. The bill was introduced by the government in the Budget session. However, despite the rise, deportations have been lower between 2014 and 2024 than in the previous decade. Although total deportations have remained below 15,000 in the past decade, India deported twice as many individuals, totalling 30,000, between 2010 and 2013. Data indicates a shift in the people deported from the country as well. While Bangladeshis topped the list of people deported from India prior to 2014.

HOLI CONTROVERSY IN BENGAL, POSTER AT SHANTINIKETAN SPARKS POLITICAL ROW

Diary Times Desk : A poster restricting celebrations with colours at an iconic artisan fair in Shantiniketan, the abode of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore about 180 km from Kolkata, has sparked a political controversy in West Bengal ahead of Holi. After the post went viral, the BJP has accused the ruling Trinamool of imposing a ban on Holi celebrations at Sonajhuri Haat, but the Mamata Banerjee government has claimed that the intention was only to preserve greenery. Reserved forest area: Playing with colours, car parking, videography and drone camera usage are prohibited," reads the poster in Bengali. Suwendu Adhikari, Leader of the Opposition in the Bengal assembly, claimed it is not a one-off incident and accused the Bengal government of appeasement. "In 2025, for the first time, meetings were held at every police station for Holi. This is a special month (Ramzan) for another community and Holi falls on a Friday this time.



SUICIDE ATTACK IN PAK'S KHYBER-PAKHTUNKHWA DAYS AFTER TRAIN SIEGE; 10 TTP TERRORISTS KILLED

Diary Times Desk : The Pakistan Army on Thursday claimed that it killed 10 militants suspected to be affiliated to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) following a suicide bomb attack near the Frontier Corps camp in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan district, Geo News reported. According to Pakistan security forces, the militants had tried to attack the Jandola checkpoint, with a suicide bomber blowing himself up in a vehicle near the Frontier Corps camp. Pakistan's interior minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the nation was standing by the security forces to "eliminate the terrorism from the country". The suicide attack comes days after Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) militants attacked the Jaffar Express, carrying 440 passengers, near the mountainous terrain of Gudar and Piru Kunri on Tuesday. The militants killed 21 passengers and four paramilitary soldiers before the Army eliminated all 33 terrorists on Wednesday.

HUGE STRETCH OF AMAZON FOREST CLEARED OUT TO BUILD HIGHWAY FOR CLIMATE SUMMIT

Diary Times Desk : Tens of thousands of acres of Amazon rainforest are being cleared out to build a new four-lane highway for the COP30 climate summit in Brazil's Belem, the BBC reported. Dubbed as the Avenida Liberdade or 'Avenue of Liberty', the eight-mile stretch, aimed at easing traffic to the host city for the November conference, has infuriated conservationists and locals. The clearing out of such large swathes of a protected rainforest for a conference where leaders are expected to assemble to discuss climate change and ways to preserve the Earth couldn't be more ironic. The state government, however, has touted the highway's "sustainable" credentials. There is lush forest on either side of the partially built road, with logs piling up on the cleared stretch that is more than 13 km long. Over 50,000 people are expected for the 30th annual UN climate summit, which Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silve boasted will be a "COP in the Amazon" and not about it, the BBC report added. The project was repeatedly halted because of environmental concerns. However, with the COP summit this year, a slew of infrastructure projects have been resurrected.

"BREATHING FOR UKRAINE ARMY": TOP PUTIN AIDE CRITICISES CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL

Diary Times Desk : A top Kremlin aide on Friday criticised the US-Ukrainian proposal for a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, saying it would just be a "breather" for the Ukrainian military. "It would be nothing more than a temporary breather for the Ukrainian military," Yuri Ushakov told state media after speaking by phone to US national security advisor Mike Waltz. He said President Vladimir Putin would "probably make more specific and substantive assessments" on Thursday. Ushakov also said that Russia was aiming for a "long-term peaceful solution" that would secure Russia's "legitimate interests". "That is what we are striving for," he said. "Any steps that imitate peaceful action are I believe not needed by anyone in the current situation," he said. US negotiators travelled to Russia on Thursday to present their plan for a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine, as Washington pushed Moscow for an "unconditional" pause to the three-year conflict.

'GUNMEN SHOT THEM ALL...': BLOW-BY-BLOW ACCOUNT OF PAKISTAN TRAIN HIJACKING HORROR IN BALOCHISTAN



Diary Times Desk : Baloch Liberation Army militants, who attacked a passenger train carrying 440 passengers in restive southwestern Pakistan, killed 21 hostages before security forces killed all 33 of the assailants, and all other passengers were rescued, officials said Wednesday. Pakistan information minister Attaullah Tarar said the separatist Baloch Liberation Army or BLA group was behind the attack, and the military operation "has successfully reached its logical conclusion". He said no passengers died because of the operation, and praised the military for "averting a potential catastrophe". The province's chief minister, Sarfraz Bugti, told a provincial assembly that troops killed all insurgents involved. Passengers who escaped or were released by the militants described panic as gunmen seized control of the train, sorting through identity cards, shooting soldiers but freeing some families, news agency AFP reported.

DONALD TRUMP WARNS EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE OF '200% TARIFF ON CHAMPAGNES, WINES'

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump has warned France and other European Union countries that he will impose a 200% tariff on all liquor imports to the United States, including champagne and wines. Donald Trump's warning came in response to the European Union's 50% tariff on US whisky. "The European Union, one of the most hostile and abusive taxing and tariffing authorities in the World, which was formed for the sole purpose of taking advantage of the United States, has just put a nasty 50% Tariff on Whisky. If this Tariff is not removed immediately, the U.S. will shortly place a 200% Tariff on all WINES, CHAMPAGNES, & ALCOHOLIC PRODUCTS COMING OUT OF FRANCE AND OTHER E.U. REPRESENTED COUNTRIES. This will be great for the Wine and Champagne businesses in the U.S.," he wrote on Truth Social. On Wednesday, Donald Trump vowed to take back wealth "stolen" by other countries.

AJIT DOVAL TO CHAIR MEETING WITH WORLD'S TOP INTELLIGENCE CHIEFS ON MARCH 16

Diary Times Desk : National Security Advisor Ajit Doval will chair a conference hosted by India on March 16, which is expected to discuss ways to enhance intelligence sharing to combat terrorism and various transnational crimes. Intelligence chiefs from the US, Australia, Germany, New Zealand and several other friendly countries of India are also expected to attend the meeting to be held in New Delhi. The Security and Intelligence Chiefs' Conference is expected to bring together heads and deputy heads of intelligence and security organisations from around 20 countries. US National Intelligence Director Tulsi Gabbard, Canadian intelligence chief Daniel Rogers and Britain's MI6 chief Richard Moore will be among top global intelligence chiefs gathering in India this weekend to attend a security conference. Apart from attending the Intelligence Chiefs' Conference, Tulsi Gabbard will address the Raisina Dialogue and hold a one-on-one meeting with NSA Doval. It is learnt that the US Intelligence Chief will visit India on March 15 after concluding her trip to Thailand.

AUSTRALIAN MAN MAKES HISTORY, SURVIVES 100 DAYS WITH ARTIFICIAL HEART IN WORLD'S FIRST SUCH SUCCESSFUL TRIAL

Diary Times Desk : An Australian man made history by living for 100 days with an artificial titanium heart while awaiting a donor transplant, according to a March 12 report by CNN. The patient, in his 40s, underwent surgery at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney in November 2024 and reportedly became the first person worldwide to leave the hospital with the device in February. Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally, killing 17.9 million people each year, according to the World Health Organisation. The artificial heart could potentially offer a long-term option for people suffering from heart failure. According to a hospital statement quoted by CNN, the artificial heart, developed by BiVACOR, is a groundbreaking device that has shown promising results in sustaining the patient's life until a donor heart becomes available. The device is still under trial and has not yet been approved for general use. The BiVACOR Total Artificial Heart (TAH) reportedly has a single moving part, a levitated rotor that's held in place by magnets. As the name suggests, it's constructed from titanium, and there are no valves or mechanical bearings.



PUNJAB BUDGET SESSION FROM MARCH 21-28, BUDGET PRESENTATION ON MARCH 26

Diary Times Desk : The Punjab Cabinet has decided to hold the Budget session from March 21 to 28, with the state's Budget proposals scheduled for presentation on March 26. The decision was made during a meeting of the Punjab Council of Ministers, chaired by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. In addition to the Budget discussions, the Cabinet also decided to open 40 new skill development schools, besides approving the departmental reports of eight departments. The meeting had a delayed start, initially scheduled for 11 am at the residence of CM Mann. Three ministers – Aman Arora, Laljit Singh Bhullar, and Dr Baljit Kaur – arrived at the CM residence but left after a 30-minute wait when the meeting was postponed by an hour. They, along with other cabinet colleagues, reconvened at 1 pm, and the meeting lasted a little over an hour.



HARYANA PREPARES FOR 'JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN' LAUNCH ON MARCH 22

Diary Times Desk : Haryana Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi conducted a review meeting with Deputy Commissioners via video conferencing to discuss preparations for the national event, "Jal Shakti Abhiyan – Catch the Rain", scheduled for March 22 at Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Panchkula. Rastogi issued necessary instructions for the smooth conduct of the event, which will be launched by Union Minister of Jal Shakti CR Patil and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. The Chief Secretary directed Deputy Commissioners to encourage participation from progressive farmers, women, and individuals who have contributed significantly to water conservation. The event aims to promote water conservation and raise awareness about sustainable water management practices.

CHANDIGARH TRAFFIC POLICE REQUESTS CANCELLATION OF 69 WRONGLY LEVIED CHALLANS

Diary Times Desk : People shouldn't be afraid of being challaned for jumping traffic signals to give way to an ambulance or VIP parade. Sachin Yadav, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chandigarh, has cancelled around 69 such challans on a request made by the Chandigarh Traffic Police. The traffic police approached the court for cancellation of the challans issued for jumping signals after it was found that the violators had genuine reasons. In the request made to the CJM court, the Inspector in-charge of Police Command and Control Centre (PCCC) Sector 17, Chandigarh, said CCTV cameras are working round-the-clock at various points in the city and traffic violations are being captured. The captured violations are processed by the Local Processing Unit and pushed to ITMS e-Challan Smart City System. The captured videos and images are seen by the operators and details of the vehicles are matched. After verification, they are pushed to NIC-e Challan Portal. On approval, auto-generated SMS notice is sent on the registered mobile number of the vehicle.

DELIMITATION A THREAT TO PUNJAB'S EXISTENCE: STATE CONGRESS LEADERS

Diary Times Desk : Punjab Congress leaders on Thursday termed the impending delimitation exercise a "threat" to the state's "traditional existence" and accused the saffron party of unleashing "political terrorism" by using probe agencies against opponents. State Congress leaders had gathered here at party headquarters Indira Bhawan for a strategy meeting. Talking to reporters, Congress leader and MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira, whose property was recently attached by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Chandigarh, said, "Political terrorism has been unleashed in the country by the BJP against their opponents through probe agencies, including the ED." He said, "Challan against me was presented in 2021 in the case. At that time my property was not attached. Now it has been attached after four years, because elections are due in Punjab in 2027. First Baghel sahib was attacked and a raid was conducted. It is because he is our Punjab in-charge. Now, to damage Congress, my property has also been attached. It is a message to all the Congress leaders not to speak against the BJP." Khaira termed the ED's move as "gross misuse of agencies by the BJP". I don't think any Punjab Congress leader will be threatened with this kind of arm twisting, he said.

TREND DECLINING, BUT PUNJAB WITNESSES 2ND HIGHEST NUMBER OF NDPS ACT CASES IN 2024

Diary Times Desk : While Punjab has witnessed a declining trend over the past three years in the registration of cases under the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, it had the second highest number of such cases among all states last year. In 2024, 9,025 cases under the NDPS Act were registered in Punjab, down from 11,564 in 2023 and 12,423 in 2022, according to data shared by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Parliament on Wednesday. In 2022 and 2023, Punjab had the third highest number of such cases in the country, with Maharashtra having a higher figure during these two years. The revelation comes even as the Punjab Government launched a major crackdown on drug trafficking across the state this month, with the police registering 1,072 cases and arresting 1,485 persons in the past 11 days. Kerala accounts for the highest number of NDPS cases in the country, which were a whopping 26,918 in 2022, 30,715 in 2023, and 27,701 in 2024. Across the country, a total of 1,02,769 cases were registered in 2022, 1,09,546 in 2023, and 89,913 in 2024. As far as other states in the region are concerned, Haryana had 3,820 cases in 2022, 3,718 in 2023, and 3,062 in 2024, while Himachal Pradesh lodged 1,518, 2,045.

CONGRESS STAGES WALKOUT DURING HARYANA BUDGET SESSION

Diary Times Desk : The Congress staged a walkout as soon as Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini began his reply on the Governor's address during the ongoing Budget Session of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha here today. Saini, who began his reply by greeting the members on Holi, said that exactly one year ago, he took oath as Chief Minister and since then, Haryana had been in election mode. While stating that the government had a long list of achievements in the last 10 years, Saini said that he would only focus on the last one year's achievements. Underlining that the government had given 26,000 jobs, Saini had only started his speech when former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda asked him for how long had these jobs been held back. Hooda said that the CM was not restricting himself to giving a reply on the Governor's address but was giving a speech on the government's achievements. A brief exchange took place between the treasury benches and the Congress before the main Opposition party staged a walkout. Later, speaking to the media, Hooda, accompanied by other Congress MLAs, said that the government had nothing to say on the Governor's address.

HISAR AIRPORT GETS LICENCE TO OPERATE FLIGHTS

Diary Times Desk : The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Government of India, has officially granted an Aerodrome Licence for public use to Maharaja Agrasen Airport in Hisar. The licence, issued to the Airports Authority of India (AAI), allows the airport to be used as a regular landing and departure site for aircraft, under specified conditions. It is expected to enhance aviation connectivity in Haryana. The conditions attached with the licence stated that the compliance with the Aircraft Act and the Aircraft Rules remains mandatory, as any violations could result in modifications, suspension or revocation of the licence. It is non-transferable and subject to conditions outlined in the Aerodrome Manual. To maintain validity, the licensee must submit quarterly progress reports addressing pending observations from DGCA inspections and self-assessed non-compliances per Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR). The licence came after a prolonged wait and the commercial flights from Hisar Airport are expected to commence in the first week of April. The Haryana government has partnered with Alliance Air to operate flights connecting Hisar to Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Ayodhya.

RAIN, SNOW LIKELY IN HIMACHAL PRADESH TILL SUNDAY

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh will likely witness widespread rain and snow till Sunday, the local Met office said on Thursday. The weather office has also issued a "yellow" alert for heavy rain, thunderstorm and lightning at isolated places in Chamba, Kangra and Kullu districts on Saturday and Sunday. Heavy rain is likely in Mandi on Sunday and heavy snow in Lahaul and Spiti on Saturday, it said. The Met has also predicted light to moderate snow in tourist destinations of Manali, Narkanda, Kufri, Solang Valley, Sissu and adjoining areas and rain in state capital Shimla. Light to moderate snow is likely at most places in Kinnaur and higher reaches of Kangra, Chamba and Kullu districts from Thursday to Sunday, it said. Light to moderate rain could occur over many places accompanied by thunderstorm and lightning in 10 districts of Sirmour, Shimla, Mandi, Solan, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Una, Kangra, Chamba and Kullu during the same period.

POLICY FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES UNDER CONSIDERATION: MINISTER

Diary Times Desk : The state government is considering a proposed Policy for Solid Waste Management Facilities in Rural Areas, 2024, said Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Anirudh Singh while replying to a question asked by Kasauli MLA Vinod Sultanpuri in the Vidhan Sabha here today. Sultanpuri raised the issue of proper disposal of wet waste in the state up to the panchayat level, including disposal of plastic waste such as shampoo bottles and chips packets. The minister informed the House that "of the total 14,73,352 households in the state, 593,625 are managing their waste by feeding cattle, 319,027 through community compost pits and 126,673 households through individual compost pits. The remaining 4,34,027 households are in the process of being assessed for appropriate wet waste management solutions. Based on this assessment and the availability of funds from the Centre, additional community and individual compost pits will be constructed." The minister said that the proposed Policy for Solid Waste Management Facilities in Rural Areas, 2024, would provide a clear framework.

BJP MLAS LEAVE HIMACHAL ASSEMBLY IN PROTEST, DEMANDS CLARITY ON KANGRA BANK GRANTS

Diary Times Desk : BJP legislators left the House on Thursday amidst pandemonium, alleging that the government was not providing answers to their questions. They left after the government stated that information regarding a question about funds disbursed to Mahila Mandals in the Dehra Assembly constituency by the Kangra Central Cooperative Bank between June and July 2024 was being collected. Unsatisfied with this response, Ashish Sharma, MLA from Hamirpur, asserted that the information was being deliberately withheld, as obtaining it in the digital age should not be difficult. He then proceeded to present the information he had sought from the House himself. Leader of the Opposition, Jai Ram Thakur, also commented on the situation, alleging that the government was attempting to conceal information on significant questions by claiming that it was being collected. Thakur further questioned the legality of the bank's disbursement of funds during the period when the model code of conduct was in effect.



HIMACHAL PRADESH'S ECONOMIC GROWTH EXPECTED TO IMPROVE SLIGHTLY IN 2024-25

Diary Times Desk : The growth rate for Himachal Pradesh in the financial year 2024-25 is expected to see a marginal improvement, rising from 6.6 per cent to 6.7 per cent, according to the Economic Survey Report presented in the Assembly on Thursday. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who also holds the Finance portfolio, presented the report for 2024-25 in the Assembly. According to advance estimates, the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices for 2024-25 is projected to be Rs 2,32,185 crore, up from Rs 2,10,662 crore in the previous year. The state's Per Capita Income (PCI) for 2024-25 is expected to reach Rs 2.57 lakh, reflecting a growth of 9.6 per cent over the previous year. The PCI for 2023-24 was Rs 2,34,782, compared to Rs 2,57,212 in the current year at current prices. The PCI has risen significantly from Rs 87,721 in 2011-12. Inflation in Himachal Pradesh has remained relatively stable, decreasing from 5 per cent in 2023-24 to 4.2 per cent in the current financial year. As per advance estimates, the Agriculture and Allied sectors are expected to grow by 3.07 per cent, a notable improvement from the negative growth of -2.63 per cent in 2023-24.

FRAUDSTER ARRESTED FOR DUPING SOLAN MAN OF RS 1.72 LAKH

Diary Times Desk : The police arrested Nikhil Thakur (26), a resident of Ganhol village in Kasauli, for duping a Solan resident of Rs 1.72 lakh in lieu of providing jobs to his children in the Military Engineering Services (MES), Chandimandir. He was arrested from Nalagarh last evening where he is facing a similar case of cheating. He was produced before a local court by the police today for securing his remand, informed Solan SP Gaurav Singh. Despite being jobless himself, the manner in which he managed to convince people of providing them government jobs has left the police surprised. His arrest has also exposed how people yearn to secure a government job by hook or crook even if it meant adopting unauthorised channels. Devendra Thakur, a resident of Damkadi village in Solan, lodged a complaint that five months ago, his sister-in-law's husband Manohar Lal told him that a person from his village, Nikhil Thakur, is deputed as superintendent in MES, Chandimandir. Some vacancies had been notified in the MES, where ITI or those having diploma were to be recruited and Thakur could help in securing them.

GOVT SEEKING FUNDS FROM NABARD TO BUY 327 ELECTRIC BUSES: DY CM

Diary Times Desk : Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri today said that the state government had sought funds from NABARD for the purchase of 327 electric buses to gradually phase out diesel buses in the fleet of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC). Agnihotri stated this while replying to a question asked by Naina Devi MLA Randhir Sharma during the Question Hour in the Vidhan Sabha. Agnihotri, who also holds the transport portfolio, said that a request in this regard had been made to NABARD. "It is in the same manner in which the previous BJP regime had sought NABARD funds for setting up ropeways that we have sought funds for the purchase of electric buses and setting up of charging stations," he added. Agnihotri said that the supply of 297 electric buses would be made within the next 11 months. The companies manufacturing electric buses were not in a position to meet the huge demand in one go. "Two companies have sent their bids for the supply of electric buses in response to tenders floated by the HRTC. Moreover, since the maintenance cost of electric buses is very expensive, this component needs to be taken care of while making the purchase," he added. He said that the government had also requested the companies to make changes in the buses to suit the hilly terrain. To another question asked by Randhir Sharma whether the economic cost of switching over to electric buses from diesel ones had been worked out, he admitted that it was beyond the capacity of the HRTC to purchase electric buses.



ROHIT SHARMA "MIGHT EXIT INTERNATIONAL CRICKET AFTER...": PLANS IN PLACE - REPORT. INDIA CAPTAIN TO WORK WITH...

Diary Times Desk : Rohit Sharma's one statement after the Champions Trophy 2025 elated the whole nation. There was a lot of speculation about his career future, but Rohit Sharma allayed all those fears in classic 'Rohit Sharma way': "I am not going to retire from this format. Just to make sure no rumours are spread moving forward. Koi future plan hai nahi, jo chal raha hai chalega (there is no future plan, whatever is going on will continue as it is)." That statement right after the Champions Trophy 2025 final went viral. A day later, Rohit gave an even more detailed response on his career plans. "Right now, I am taking things as they come. It wouldn't be fair for me to think too far ahead. At this moment, my focus is on playing well and maintaining the right mindset. I don't want to draw any lines and say whether I will or won't play in the 2027 World Cup," he said on Jio Hotstar. There's no point in making such statements right now. Realistically, I have always taken my career one step at a time." However, if a report is to be believed, Rohit Sharma has already plans ready to extend his career till the 2027 World Cup. "If things go according to plan, he might exit international cricket after the quadrennial ICC event, to be played in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia," the report in Cricbuzz said.



"LACK OF ALL-ROUNDERS IS A WORRY": NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU WARNS INDIA FROM WOUNDED ENGLAND FOR FIVE-TEST SERIES

Diary Times Desk : Indian players will be involved in the Indian Premier League 2025 for two months. The team won the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, so the players will not play international cricket. Former India opener Navjot Singh Sidhu is worried about the team's performance in England's five-test series. The challenging assignment would start after the 18th season of the cash-rich league. "The things to be worried is that the IPL is now coming. No player is ready to sit out of the tournament. They will play the IPL and then all of a sudden England tour starts. Conditions will be totally different. The last Test series in England had started on August 4 and now the series will end on August 2. The matches will be played in June and July. There will be a lot of assistance for the fast bowlers. Ball will move and seam a lot," he said on Sports Tak. "England are ready at home and they are like wounded tigers. They have been beaten," he added. India have been poor in red-ball cricket, with New Zealand thumping the sub-continent team by a margin of 3-1 while Australia recorded a 3-1 win. Sidhu said that India's biggest concern is the lack of all-rounders.

IGNORED CHETESHWAR PUJARA SENDS BIG MESSAGE TO BCCI AHEAD OF ENGLAND TESTS: "IF I WAS THERE..."

Diary Times Desk : Veteran Indian cricket team batter Cheteshwar Pujara sent a strong message to the selectors ahead of the Test series against England. India's next assignment in red-ball cricket will be the five-match series in England and it will be a big challenge for skipper Rohit Sharma as well as head coach Gautam Gambhir after the humiliating series loss against Australia. In an interview with Revsportz, Pujara said that he will be ready to play if the team needs him. He also emphasised on his performances in the domestic circuit and said that he will be open to any opportunities of making a comeback to the national team. "Yes, of course. As a cricketer, you always want to play for the Indian team. And I am doing whatever I can to achieve that success. If the team needs me, I'm definitely ready. I've been playing domestic cricket. I've been playing county cricket for the last couple of years. I've been scoring heavily in the domestic circuit. So if given an opportunity, yes, I'll be more than ready to grab it with both hands." Pujara last played for India in 2023 in the World Test Championship (WTC) Final against Australia.

'HARDIK KOI WAQAR YOUNIS NAHI HAIN': SHOAIB AKHTAR, MOHAMMAD HAFEZ SAY 'ABDUL RAZZAQ BETTER THAN PANDYA'

Diary Times Desk : India's premier all-rounder Hardik Pandya is a gun player, who makes little but significant contributions in both front of the game. The all-rounder was instrumental in India's triumph at the recently-concluded ICC Champions Trophy. He started the tournament as a third seamer and as the tournament progressed his bowling workload was lifted. After the first two group stage encounters, Pandya was seen spearheading India's attack with the new ball alongside Mohammed Shami, giving cushion to his skipper to field four spinners in slow Dubai tracks. With the bat, he contributed and stood tall whenever required helping India maintain an unbeaten run and win the marquee tournament for the third time. Weighing-in on Pandya's all-round show, former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar made an interesting assessment. The Rawalpindi Express compared Pandya with some legendary figures such as Malcolm Marshall, Waqar Younis, Javagal Srinath, and Brett Lee and said he is not close to any but hailed his mindset, which he feels makes him a match-winner.



JIOHOTSTAR BREAKS RECORDS WITH HISTORIC ICC MEN'S CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025

Diary Times Desk : JioHotstar set new benchmarks in the digital streaming space as the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 wrapped up with an electrifying final. The tournament delivered a record-breaking live sports experience across India, with over 540 crore total views, nearly 11,000 crore minutes of cumulative watch time, and a peak concurrency of 6.12 crores. A significant portion of the viewership came from Hindi-speaking regions, accounting for more than 38% of the total, with states like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Goa, Punjab, and Haryana leading the charge. Additionally, JioHotstar achieved a remarkable 80% penetration on WiFi-enabled CTVs, with Maharashtra recording the highest viewership, highlighting the growing popularity of large-screen streaming in key regions. India's historic win against New Zealand in the final led to an unprecedented 124.2 crore views on JioHotstar. The tournament's excitement was marked by numerous viewership spikes during critical, edge-of-the-seat moments.

COCAINE SUPPLY CASE HITS AUSTRALIA CRICKET, 44-TEST VETERAN FOUND GUILTY

Diary Times Desk : Former Australian spinner Stuart MacGill was found guilty of involvement in a cocaine deal on Thursday, but cleared of participating in large-scale drug supply. A Sydney District Court jury acquitted the 54-year-old leg-spinner of facilitating a one-kg cocaine deal worth AUD 330,000 (approximately Rs 1.81 crore) in April 2021. However, he was convicted of the charge of taking part in drug supply. MacGill, who played 44 Tests for Australia, "showed little emotion" as the verdict was read, according to a reports in Australian media. Hearing of his sentence was adjourned for eight weeks. The court heard that MacGill introduced his regular drug dealer to his brother-in-law, Marino Sotiropoulos, at a meeting under his restaurant on Sydney's north shore. While he denied knowledge of the transaction, prosecutors argued the deal could not have taken place without his involvement. Former Australia spinner Stuart MacGill was involved in an incident last year where he was allegedly kidnapped. However, the alleged kidnappers -- two brothers -- have claimed that Macgill came to them willingly and was involved in the drug trade.