

NEWS IN BRIEF

**FEMALE SHOOTER
ALLEGEDLY RAPED
IN FARIDABAD
HOTEL, THREE
ARRESTED****Diary Times Desk :**

A 23-year-old female shooter alleged she was raped by her female friend's acquaintance in a Faridabad hotel. She was in town for a competition at Tilpat Shooting Range.

The victim's complaint led to an FIR at the Sarai Khawaja police station. Police arrested three accused including the main accused, the victim's female friend, and the main accused's companion. They were sent into judicial custody.

According to police, the shooter, a resident of Bhiwani, came to Faridabad with her female friend for the competition. On Wednesday, they booked hotel rooms with the accused. The victim alleges Satendra raped her while her friend was out. She locked the others in a room and went to police.

Police arrested Satendra, Gaurav, and the victim's friend from the hotel. "The accused were sent into judicial custody. Probe is underway," said SHO Rakesh Kumar.

**CASE FILED
AGAINST
ORGANISERS AFTER
ACTOR NIDHII
AGERWAL MOBBED,
PUSHED DURING
EVENT AT
HYDERABAD MALL****Diary Times Desk :**

Police have registered a suo motu case against the organisers of the 'Raja Saab' song-release event held at Lulu Mall, Kukatpally, following an incident in which actor Nidhi Agerwal was mobbed and pushed by fans while exiting the venue in Hyderabad, said KPHB police. The case was registered under the jurisdiction of the KPHB police station after videos from the event surfaced online, showing the actor struggling to leave the mall amid a large and unruly crowd. Police said the matter is under investigation, and action will be taken based on findings related to crowd control and safety arrangements. The incident took place on Wednesday during the launch of the song 'Sahana Sahana' from her upcoming film 'The Raja Saab.' Videos now circulating on social media show the situation at the venue.

**PM MODI OMAN
VISIT****21ST-CENTURY INDIA TAKES BIG, SWIFT DECISIONS;
DELIVERS RESULTS IN TIME-BOUND MANNER: PM MODI
IN OMAN**

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India of the 21st century takes big and swift decisions, moves ahead by setting big goals and delivers results in a time-bound manner. Modi was speaking at a gathering of the Indian community in Oman's capital Muscat. The prime minister is here on a two-day visit.

"Twenty-first century India takes bold decisions and swift decisions, moves ahead with big goals, delivers results within a defined timeline," he said. Modi hailed the recent decision of UNESCO to inscribe the 'Deepavali' festival on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

"Our 'diya' will now illuminate not just our homes, but entire world," he said. It is a matter of pride for all Indians, and this "global recognition for Diwali is a recognition of that light of ours which spreads the message of hope, amity and humanity," he said.

Addressing the gathering of Indian students and the community at the 'Maitiri Parv' event, Modi said that India and Oman are tied not just by geography, but also by generations. "Our diversity is a strong foundation of our culture. Every tradition comes with a new thinking...We Indians, wherever we go, we respect diversity," he said.

Underscoring that the Indian diaspora has become a living example of coexistence and cooperation, he said, "You are the biggest custodian of these centuries-old ties." In his message to the youth, Modi said, "Dream big, learn deeply, innovate boldly."

**CONGRESS, INDIA BLOC MPS PROTEST IN PARLIAMENT OVER
MGNREGA RENAMING, INVOKE GANDHI LEGACY**

Diary Times Desk : Congress leaders and several Opposition MPs on Thursday staged a protest inside the Parliament complex against the reported move to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

The protest march began from the Gandhi statue and proceeded to the Makar Dwar, with MPs raising slogans and holding placards asserting that Mahatma Gandhi's legacy would not be undermined. Posters carried by the protesters read, "Will not tolerate the disrespect of Mahatma Gandhi" and its Hindi equivalent, "Mahatma Gandhi ka apman nahi sahenge, nahi sahenge".

The demonstration was led by Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, along with MPs from the INDIA bloc. The leaders accused the government of erasing Gandhi's name from a flagship rural employment law that, they said, transformed village economies and provided a statutory right to work for millions. Opposition MPs said the renaming amounted to an ideological assault on both Mahatma Gandhi and the constitutional guarantee of social welfare. "The Modi government has not only insulted the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, but has also crushed the Right to Work, which brought about socio-economic changes in India's villages. Against this tyranny of the ruling dictatorial government, we will struggle from Parliament to the streets," Kharge said in a post on X.

**GIRIRAJ SINGH'S 'JAHANNUM MEIN JAYE' REMARKS
ON WOMAN AT CENTRE OF 'NAQAB ROW'
TRIGGERS BACKLASH**

Diary Times Desk : Amid the Nitish Kumar 'naqab' controversy, Union Minister Giriraj Singh on Thursday created a fresh row when he said that it is up to the woman concerned to refuse appointment to the government job or "go to hell", drawing flak from many Opposition leaders.

Singh was responding to Monday's incident in Patna where the Bihar Chief Minister pulled the 'naqab' (veil) off the face of the newly-recruited AYUSH doctor while she was receiving her letter of appointment.

Several Opposition leaders had called Kumar's act "shameful". Singh defended Nitish Kumar saying he has "not done anything wrong".

"If someone is going to collect an appointment letter, should they not show their face? Is this some Islamic country? Nitish Kumar acted as a guardian," he argued. "If you are going to get a passport, do you not show your face? When you go to the airport, do you not show your face? People talk about Pakistan and Englishtan, but this is India. In India, the rule of law prevails," Singh said and added that Kumar did the right thing.

**RED FORT BLAST: COURT SENDS NINTH
ARRESTED ACCUSED TO NIA CUSTODY TILL
DECEMBER 26**

Diary Times Desk : A Delhi court on Thursday remanded Yasir Ahmad Dar, the ninth accused arrested in a case related to the Red Fort blast, to NIA custody till December 26.

Special Judge Prashant Sharma allowed the plea of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) seeking Dar's custodial interrogation. The accused was produced in the Patiala House District Court amid heavy security around 2.30 pm.

Mediapersons were barred from covering the proceedings. Earlier in the day, the NIA arrested Dar, a Jammu and Kashmir resident and allegedly a close associate of suicide bomber Umar-un-Nabi.

Dar allegedly played an active role in the conspiracy behind the blast that claimed 15 lives and left many others injured on November 10, the NIA said. An active participant in the conspiracy, Dar had allegedly taken an oath to carry out self-sacrificial operations, the agency said. It said Dar was in close contact with the other accused in the case, including Umar-un-Nabi and Mufti Irfan. The NIA has already arrested eight people, including four doctors — Dr Muzammil Ganaie, Dr Adeel Rather, Dr Shaheen Sayeed and Dr Bilal Naseer Malla — and religious preacher Maulvi Irfan. Two others, Amir Rashid Ali and Jasir Bilal Wani alias Danish, have also been arrested. Ali allegedly purchased the car in his name, which was later loaded with explosives including ammonium nitrate and detonated near the Red Fort.

G RAM G BILL**'WILL FINISH OFF RURAL
EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE
SCHEME': PRIYANKA ON G
RAM G BILL**

Diary Times Desk : Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday vowed to strongly oppose the G RAM G bill, asserting that the proposed legislation will finish off the rural employment guarantee scheme completely.

The Congress general secretary also asserted that the Opposition is united on the issue and will strongly oppose the government move.

Her remarks came soon after the Lok Sabha passed the bill that seeks to replace the 20-year-old MGNREGA with a new initiative that guarantees rural jobs for 125 days every year amid vociferous protests by the Opposition.

Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan responded to the eight-hour discussion on The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, asserting that the Modi government was ensuring that the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi were upheld through various initiatives taken by it. Asked about the opposition uproar and the passage of the bill, Priyanka Gandhi told reporters, "We will strongly oppose this bill. All parties are unanimously opposed to it. This bill will finish off MGNREGA. From whatever perspective you look at the bill, the increasing of work days from 100 days to 125 is their deceit.

**SOURAV GANGULY FILES POLICE
COMPLAINT AGAINST FOOTBALL
FAN CLUB HEAD OVER
'OBJECTIONABLE' REMARKS**

Diary Times Desk : Former India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly on Thursday lodged a police complaint against the head of Kolkata-based 'Argentina football fan club', alleging that the individual made objectionable remarks against him, a senior officer said.

Ganguly, in his complaint emailed to Cyber Cell of the Kolkata police, said the person's statements have adversely affected his reputation and mental peace.

"The complaint states that he deliberately levelled serious allegations against Ganguly without any factual basis," the police officer said.

The accused reportedly made the remarks against Ganguly while interacting with a journalist.

Ganguly added in the complaint that such "baseless allegations appear to be an attempt to tarnish his hard-earned reputation".



INDIA REVIEWING ALLEGATIONS OF ANTITRUST BREACHES BY INDIGO



Diary Times Desk : India's competition regulator said on Thursday that it is reviewing allegations of antitrust violations by budget airline IndiGo following recent flight disruptions that affected air travel nationwide. IndiGo cancelled around 4,500 flights earlier this month due to poor pilot roster planning, stranding tens of thousands of passengers in one of the country's biggest aviation disruptions in recent years. The incident dented the airline's reputation, even as it continues to control more than 60 per cent of the domestic aviation market.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) said it "has taken cognisance of information filed against IndiGo in the context of the recent flight disruptions witnessed in the aviation sector across various routes". "Based on the initial assessment, the Commission has decided to proceed further," it added in a statement, without disclosing details of the allegations or the cases filed. IndiGo did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The CCI has the authority to direct its investigation arm to probe such matters.

GIRIRAJ SINGH'S 'JAHANNUM MEIN JAYE' REMARKS ON WOMAN AT CENTRE OF 'NAQAB ROW' TRIGGERS BACKLASH

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PM MODI RECEIVES OMAN'S HIGHEST CIVILIAN HONOUR, 29TH GLOBAL AWARD

Diary Times Desk : Oman conferred its top national honour, The First Class of the Order of Oman, on PM Modi, recognising his contributions to strengthening bilateral ties. Previous recipients include Queen Elizabeth, Emperor Akihito, Nelson Mandela, and King Abdullah of Jordan. This is PM Modi's 29th global honour, following Ethiopia's highest honour, the Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia. His visit to Oman marks 70 years of diplomatic relations, focusing on deepening strategic partnerships in trade, investment, energy, defence, and culture.



NITISH KUMAR OWES UNCONDITIONAL APOLOGY TO THE LADY: JAVED AKHTAR ON 'NAQAB' ROW

Diary Times Desk : Veteran writer-lyricist Javed Akhtar on Thursday said his views against the traditional concept of 'parda' are well known but he cannot accept what Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has done by pulling off a woman's veil at a public function. The incident, a video clip of which has gone viral on social media and has kicked off a major political controversy, took place at 'Samvad', the CM's secretariat, where appointment letters were being given to the appointees by the CM. When the woman came up for her letter of appointment, Kumar saw her 'naqab', and said 'what is this'. He then removed the veil. In a post on X, Akhtar said he condemns the incident in "very strong words". "Every one who knows me even in the most cursory manner knows how much I am against the traditional concept of 'parda' but it doesn't mean that by any stretch of imagination I can accept what Mr Nitish Kumar has done to a Muslim lady doctor... Mr Nitish Kumar owes an unconditional apology."

SCULPTOR RAM SUTAR, DESIGNER OF STATUE OF UNITY, PASSES AWAY

Diary Times Desk : Noted sculptor Ram Sutar, known for designing the world's tallest statue – Statue of Unity – in Gujarat, passed away late on Wednesday night at his Noida residence, his son said. He was 100 and ailing with age-related illnesses. "It is with profound grief that we inform you of the passing of my father Shri Ram Vanji Sutar on 17th December midnight at our residence," his son Anil Sutar said in a note shared with the press on Thursday. Born in a humble family in Gondur village under the Dhule district of present-day Maharashtra on February 19, 1925, Sutar was known to have been drawn to sculpting from his childhood. A gold medallist from JJ School of Art and Architecture, Mumbai, Sutar, has to his credit a long list of achievements. The iconic statues of Mahatma Gandhi seated in a meditating pose and of Chhatrapati Shivaji riding a horse on the Parliament premises rank among his finest creations.

PASSIVE EUTHANASIA: SC TO MEET PATIENT'S PARENTS ON JANUARY 13

Diary Times Desk : After perusing a report submitted by the AIIMS on the condition of a 32-year-old man in a vegetative state since 2013 after falling from a building, the Supreme Court on Thursday said it would meet his parents on January 13 before deciding to allow passive euthanasia to end his agony.

"It's a very sad report. We cannot keep this boy in this stage," a Bench of Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice KV Viswanathan said as it perused a report containing Harish Rana's medical history filed by a secondary medical board of doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here.

It scheduled a meeting with the patient's parents at 3 pm on January 13 next year to decide on his father Ashok Rana's petition for passive euthanasia by withdrawing artificial life support to his son – lying in a comatose condition for more than 12 years. The Bench directed that the report be shared with petitioner's counsel Rashmi Nandakumar and Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati. "We have reached a stage wherein we will have to take a final call. So your thorough assistance will be required. We will ask the Registry to provide you with one copy of the report. Study the report. Ms Bhati and Ms Rashmi you will have to assist us. It's a very sad report and it will be a big challenge for us also but we can't keep the boy like this for all time to come," the Bench said.

CANCER PATIENTS IN INDIA COULD RISE TO 2 MILLION BY 2040: MOS JITENDRA SINGH

Diary Times Desk : India ranks third globally in cancer prevalence, after China and the United States, and is likely to record around two million cases by 2040, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh informed the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. Responding to supplementaries during Question Hour, Singh said the Department of Biotechnology has developed the country's first-ever HPV vaccine for the prevention of cervical cancer in women, and efforts are under way to make it available to a larger population at an affordable price or free of cost. "It is true that cancer incidence has increased all over the world. Globally, there are around 20 million cancer cases every year. In India alone, we have about 1.4 to 1.5 million cases, or nearly 15 lakh," Singh said. "This figure is expected to rise to almost two million by 2040, which means close to 20 lakh. As far as cancer prevalence is concerned, India stands at number three, after China and the USA," he added. The minister said the rising burden of cancer could be attributed to multiple factors, including the changing disease spectrum in the country. Till the 1980s, India largely grappled with communicable diseases.

G RAM G BILL TO REPLACE 20-YEAR-OLD MGNREGA PASSED IN LOK SABHA AS OPPOSITION TEARS COPIES

Diary Times Desk : The Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Thursday after the passage of the G RAM G Bill amid opposition uproar over its provisions.

A discussion on air pollution in the Delhi National Capital Region is to be taken up later during the day.

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is expected to initiate the discussion.

The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, seeking to guarantee rural jobs for 125 days every year,

replacing the 20-year-old MGNREGA, was passed on Thursday after Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan replied to a debate on it.

The opposition raised slogans against the government and tore copies of the Bill as Chouhan delivered his concluding remarks.

Speaker Om Birla adjourned the proceedings for the day after the passage of the bill. Friday is the last day of the Winter Session.

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'WILL FINISH OFF RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME': PRIYANKA ON G RAM G BILL

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3 ARRESTED FOR GANGRAPE, BLACKMAIL OF COLLEGE STUDENT IN BENGALURU

Diary Times Desk : Three men have been arrested for allegedly gangraping a 19-year-old college student and blackmailing her using a video of the assault, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred in October at the house of one of the accused in Magadi taluk of Bengaluru South district, they added. Of the three accused, two are college students, while the third is an electrician by profession, police said. According to police, the woman came into contact with the prime accused, also a college student, around six to seven months ago. He befriended her, gained her confidence, and later entered into a relationship with her after promising marriage. On the pretext of the relationship, he allegedly established a physical relationship with her and secretly recorded the act on his mobile phone without her knowledge. He later showed the video to his friends, who are co-accused in the case, a senior police officer said. In October, the prime accused allegedly threatened and blackmailed the woman using the video clip of their intimate moments.

FROM PATIALA FIELDS TO KOCHI BIENNALE: KULPREET SINGH'S ART REFRAMES STUBBLE-BURNING DEBATE

Diary Times Desk : A farm somewhere in Patiala is set on fire by a group of Sikh men — a traditional way of preparing the field for the next crop — in a practice blamed for air pollution in north India, especially Delhi-NCR. The short film by visual artist and farmer Kulpreet Singh at the ongoing Kochi-Muziris Biennale is the centrepiece of his work "Indelible Black" through which he asks the burning question — who should really be blamed for the crisis, the farmers or the many pollutant-inducing human activities like industries, traffic and wars. "Why does the farmer always get blamed when the source (of pollution) lies somewhere else? How come the US and China contribute to 40 per cent of global carbon emissions when there is no stubble burning?" Singh asked in a conversation with PTI. Playing on loop inside a darkroom at Anand Warehouse in Fort Kochi, the eight-minute film shows a group of men, Singh and team, burning stubble with background sounds.



WATCH LIONEL MESSI MEET HIS 'MATCH' MANEKLAL IN GUJARAT'S JAMNAGAR, INTERNET LOVES IT



Diary Times Desk : Lionel Messi, the Argentine football superstar, during his India tour visited Vantara, a wildlife rescue and conservation centre in Gujarat's Jamnagar, and had a blast playing football with Maneklal, a baby elephant.

The heartwarming moment was captured on video and has gone viral on Instagram, showing Messi kicking a ball inside the elephant enclosure as Maneklal gently nudges it back with its leg.

The clip was shared on Instagram by @ambani_update and was captioned "When football meets its biggest fan as Messi plays ball with Maneklal at Vantara."

Furthermore, as a token of appreciation, Anant Ambani and his wife Radhika Merchant named a lion cub 'Lionel' in Messi's honour.

The Argentine legend was welcomed to Vantara with traditional Hindu rituals and interacted closely with the animals, including tigers, elephants and reptiles.

According to ANI, citing a statement from Vantara, "At the Foster Care Centre, dedicated to orphaned and vulnerable young animals, Messi learned about their journeys of resilience."

Messi's visit to Vantara was part of his India tour, which included stops in Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi.

US APPROVES \$11.1 BILLION ARMS PACKAGE FOR TAIWAN, LARGEST EVER



Diary Times Desk : The United States on Wednesday approved \$11.1 billion in arms sales to Taiwan, the largest ever US weapons package for the island which is under increasing military pressure from China. The Taiwan arms sale announcement is the second under US President Donald Trump's current administration, and comes as Beijing ramps up its military and diplomatic pressure against Taiwan, whose government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims. The proposed arms sale covers eight items, including HIMARS rocket systems, howitzers, Javelin anti-tank missiles, Altius loitering munition drones and parts for other equipment, Taiwan's defence ministry said in a statement.

US GOVERNMENT ADMITS NEGLIGENCE IN HELICOPTER-PLANE COLLISION THAT KILLED 67 IN WASHINGTON

Diary Times Desk : The government on Wednesday admitted that the Federal Aviation Administration and the Army played a role in the collision last January between an airliner and a Black Hawk helicopter near the nation's capital, which killed 67 people. In its official response to the first lawsuit filed by the family of one of the victims, the government said it is partly liable for the crash because an air traffic controller violated procedures that night. However, the filing also suggested that others - including the pilots of both the jet and the helicopter, contributed to the incident. The lawsuit has also blamed American Airlines and its regional partner, PSA Airlines, for the crash, though both carriers have filed motions seeking dismissal. Officials said at least 28 bodies were recovered from the icy waters of the Potomac River after the helicopter apparently flew into the path of the American Airlines regional jet as it was landing at Ronald Reagan National Airport in northern Virginia, just across the river from Washington. The plane was carrying 60 passengers and four crew members.

RARE SMOG SPIKE HITS BEIJING AFTER YEARS OF POLLUTION CLEAN-UP

Diary Times Desk : Beijing was shrouded in heavy smog on Thursday with AQI climbing to "very unhealthy" levels of 215, a rare spike in pollution in the Chinese capital after years of expensive cleaning up. China's national observatory on Wednesday issued a yellow alert for heavy fog in some parts of the country, saying that thick fog is expected to shroud parts of Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, Hubei, the Sichuan Basin and Chongqing on Thursday. The smog with polluted air quality is rare these days in Beijing, which used to witness very heavy pollution before the government initiated a series of steps, including closure and relocation of heavy polluting industries in 2016, spending billions of dollars. Officials say the city's switch to natural gas or electric public heating in winters from the coal-fired ones, spending over \$1 billion, has helped reduce pollution levels. Beijing's efforts to tackle heavy pollution were in the news in recent days in the backdrop of New Delhi witnessing a deepening pollution crisis.

OVER 1,000 CIVILIANS KILLED IN SUDAN'S DARFUR WHEN PARAMILITARY GROUP SEIZED CAMP: UN

Diary Times Desk : Over 1,000 civilians were killed when a Sudanese paramilitary group took over a famine-stricken displacement camp in Sudan's Darfur in April, including about a third who were summarily executed, according to a report by the UN Human Rights Office on Thursday. For months before the April 11-13 assault, the Rapid Support Forces blocked entry of food and supplies to the Zamzam camp in Sudan's western region of Darfur housing nearly half a million people displaced by civil war, according to the UN report. During the takeover, the RSF directed attacks against civilians, the UN report said, and survivors reported widespread killings, rape, torture and abductions, with at least 319 people executed in the camp or as they tried to flee. "Such deliberate killing of civilians or persons hors de combat may constitute the war crime of murder," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk in a statement accompanying the 18-page report. The findings are based on interviews conducted in July 2025 with 155 survivors and witnesses who fled to Chad. One of them testified that eight people hiding in a room in the camp were killed by RSF fighters who inserted rifles through a window and shot at the group, the report said.

FORMER BANGLADESH PM ZIA'S HEALTH CONTINUES TO BE CRITICAL: DOCTOR

Diary Times Desk : Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia remains critical even as she continues to receive treatment at a Dhaka hospital, her personal doctor AZM Zahid Hossain said on Thursday. Zia, the 80-year-old chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka's Evercare Hospital since November 23 for multiple health complications and was shifted to a coronary care unit (CCU) later. On December 11, she was placed on "ventilator support to give rest to her lungs and other vital organs." "She is receiving the treatment being given to her properly. Her physical condition continues to stay the same as it was a few days ago," Hossain, also a member of BNP's policy making standing committee, told reporters. He also described Zia's condition as "stable" and expected she "will recover and be able to play her proper role in the country's politics." Zia's medical board, in a statement on December 11, said she was kept under round the clock medical watch by a team of local and foreign specialists, as several of her vital organs continued to be under severe stress.



SIKH MAN WHO HELPED RESTRAIN ATTACKER AT SYDNEY'S BONDI BEACH SAYS 'WANTED TO GET ATTACKER DOWN'

Diary Times Desk : A 34-year-old Indian-origin man who helped restrain one of the alleged shooters of the Bondi Beach attack in Australia said he wanted to help bring one of the assailants down and assist anyone who needed help. Fifteen people were killed after a father-son duo launched a gun attack on the occasion of a Jewish festival being celebrated at the beach on December 14. Forty others, including three Indian students, were injured in the attack. One of the attackers, Sydney resident Sajid Akram, 50, was shot dead. His 24-year-old Australia-born son, Naveed Akram, was injured. Amandeep Singh-Bola, born in New Zealand to Indian and Kiwi parents, helped tackle suspect Sajid Akram, SBS News reported. Singh-Bola ran onto the bridge where the alleged shooter was firing at people, pinning him down with the help of a police officer. "I jumped on top of [the shooter] and grabbed his arms. The police officer helped me and said not to let him go," the report quoted him as saying. "I wanted to help get one of [the alleged shooters] down, or just help anybody that needed help," he said. Singh-Bola, who initially dismissed the gunshots as fireworks, was eating a kebab and watching the sunset over the beach when the shooting occurred. "It was almost like tunnel vision — just trying to hide behind things and not be seen, just trying to find out where he was. Once I saw where he was, nothing else really mattered," the personal trainer said. Singh-Bola said police had shot the alleged gunman, and while he lay on top of him, he could feel the shooter dying.



TRUMP IN WHITE HOUSE SPEECH ANNOUNCES USD 1,776 BONUS FOR US TROOPS, SAYS ECONOMY STRONG

Diary Times Desk : President Donald Trump said in a White House speech on Wednesday night that he was sending a USD 1,776 bonus check to US troops for Christmas, indicating that tariff revenues were funding the payments as he sought to reassure a worried public about the health of the economy. Trump said 1.45 million military service members would receive the "warrior dividend before Christmas." "The checks are already on the way," he said. The bonus payments come even as millions of Americans remain anxious about the rising costs of groceries, housing, utilities and holiday gifts, with inflation still elevated and the labour market having weakened meaningfully in recent months. Flanked by two Christmas trees.

SHORTEST DAY OF YEAR DESCENDING ON NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

Diary Times Desk : Yes, the darkest day of the year is here, but that means brighter days are ahead. Sunday is the shortest day of the year north of the equator, where the solstice marks the start of astronomical winter. It's the opposite in the Southern Hemisphere, where it is the longest day of the year and summer will start. The word "solstice" comes from the Latin words "sol" for sun and "stitium" which can mean "pause" or "stop." The solstice is an end of the sun's annual march higher or lower in the sky. The winter solstice is when the sun makes its shortest, lowest arc. The good news for sun lovers: It then starts climbing again and days will get a little longer every day until late June. People have marked solstices for eons with celebrations and monuments such as Stonehenge, which was designed to align with the sun's paths.

IN HOLIDAY SPEECH, TRUMP HIGHLIGHTS VICTORIES AMID SINKING APPROVAL RATINGS

Diary Times Desk : In a rare evening address from the White House, U.S. President Donald Trump boasted on Wednesday of his accomplishments and blamed his democratic predecessor for soaring consumer prices as his party braces for a tough midterm election next year. "Eleven months ago, I inherited a mess, and I'm fixing it," Trump said in a speech that lasted less than 20 minutes and was delivered at a jarringly rapid-fire pace. The Republican president, who regularly protests that he does not get credit for his accomplishments, offered few new policy initiatives to address high costs. The speech instead was delivered with a pronounced sense of grievance, with Trump complaining about migrant invasions, violent crime and transgender rights in the White House's Diplomatic Reception Room festooned with holiday decor. He placed blame at the feet of former President Joe Biden, previous trade deals, immigrants and what he described as a corrupt system. At the same time, Trump touted his administration's work this year on a range of issues from reducing border crossings to bringing down prices of some goods. And he promised the nation would be stronger next year.



RAIN CREATES CRIMSON SPECTACLE ON IRAN'S HORMUZ ISLAND FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR

Diary Times Desk : Rainfall on Iran's Hormuz Island briefly transformed the coastline of its famed Red Beach into a striking natural scene this week, as runoff flowing over the shore turned the water shades of deep red, intensifying the island's iron-rich soil washing into the sea. The beach is known for its vivid red sand and cliffs, created by high concentrations of iron oxide. When rain falls, as it did starting on Tuesday, streams of red soil flow toward the shoreline, colouring both the beach and the surrounding water and creating a sharp contrast with the blue waters of the Persian Gulf. The phenomenon regularly attracts tourists, photographers and social media attention. Beyond its visual appeal, the red soil — locally known as gelak — is exported in limited quantities and used in the production of cosmetics, pigments and some traditional products. Hormuz Island lies in the Strait of Hormuz, where the Persian Gulf meets the Gulf of Oman, about 1,080 kilometres south of Iran's capital, Tehran. Rainfall is relatively rare on the arid island, and happens mainly during the winter and early spring. The island has become a popular destination with visitors drawn to its unusual landscapes.

POLISH CONSTITUTIONAL TRIBUNAL VIOLATES PRINCIPLES OF EU LAW, EUROPEAN COURT RULES

Diary Times Desk : Poland's Constitutional Tribunal infringed fundamental principles of European law and cannot be considered independent and impartial because of irregularities in the appointment of judges, the European Union's top court ruled on Thursday. During its two terms in government from 2015 to 2023, the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party introduced judicial reforms which Brussels said undermined the rule of law and which critics blamed for chaos in the judiciary. The Constitutional Tribunal, which rules on the validity of laws and is dominated by judges appointed under PiS, issued rulings stating that Poland's constitution had primacy over EU law, undermining a key principle of the Union. "The Court... ruled that Poland had failed to fulfil its obligations because (the Tribunal) had infringed the principle of effective judicial protection and disregarded the primacy, autonomy, effectiveness and uniform application of EU law," the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) said in a statement. It said there had been "serious irregularities" in the appointment of the Tribunal's president and three judges calling into question its status "as an independent and impartial tribunal established by law within the meaning of EU law." Brussels took Poland to court over the rulings, and the current pro-European.

INDIA RESUMES VISA CENTRE OPERATION IN DHAKA, FUNCTIONING SUSPENDED AT TWO OTHERS

Diary Times Desk : India on Thursday resumed operations at its visa application centre in Dhaka, a day after it was closed due to escalated security concerns, but shut two other centres in Bangladesh on similar grounds, officials and reports said. The Indian Visa Application Centres (IVACs) in southwestern Khulna and northwestern Rajshahi were closed citing security concerns. There are five IVAC centres in Bangladesh. Besides those in Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi, the others are located in the southeastern port city of Chattogram and in northeastern Sylhet. The IVAC at Dhaka's Jamuna Future Park serves as the main, integrated centre for all Indian visa services in the capital. "The Indian Visa Application Centre in Dhaka is now operational and functioning normally," an IVAC official told PTI. The Dhaka centre had announced a temporary closure on Wednesday amid heightened tensions, after a large group of anti-India protesters moved towards the Indian High Commission.



INDIA, OMAN WELCOME FIRST PHASE OF GAZA PEACE PLAN, BACK INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE

Diary Times Desk : India and Oman on Thursday welcomed the signing of the first phase of the Gaza Peace Plan and reiterated their support for the initiative, while underlining the need for a just, lasting and negotiated resolution to the conflict, including the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state. The position was reflected in the India-Oman Joint Statement issued during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oman from December 17-18. According to the joint statement, "The two sides expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza and called for safe and timely delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians." India and Oman also welcomed diplomatic progress on the conflict, noting, "They welcomed the signing of the first phase of the Gaza Peace Plan and reiterated their support for the plan." Reaffirming their commitment to stability in the region, both countries stressed the importance of dialogue.

65 CANADIAN MPS DENOUNCE CCP REPRESSION OF FALUN GONG WORLDWIDE

Diary Times Desk : Canadian lawmakers are insisting that the repression of Falun Gong practitioners by Beijing must cease and that the communist government must also put an end to its human rights violations in China, as reported by The Epoch Times (TET). The statement comes as 12 lawmakers recently joined more than 50 colleagues in endorsing a joint declaration denouncing the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) persecution of Falun Gong practitioners within China and its growing repression of the meditation group abroad, including in Canada. With these signatures, the total number of parliamentarians denouncing the CCP's transnational repression has reached 65. The initiative began earlier this summer as the campaign against the spiritual group marked its 27th year on July 20, as highlighted by TET. The statement reads, "We, the undersigned Parliamentarians.

PM MODI VISIT TO OMAN CONCLUDES WITH CEPA, MOUS IN MARITIME, AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION



Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day state visit to Oman concluded with several key agreements and initiatives signed between the two countries aimed at strengthening bilateral ties with a focus on economic, agricultural and maritime cooperation. According to the list of outcomes document issued by the Ministry of External Affairs during the PM's visit, India and Oman signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to deepen economic and commercial integration, reduce trade barriers, and create a stable framework to increase trade, unlock opportunities across major sectors, enhance economic growth, create jobs, and boost investment flows. In their joint statement, both sides "welcomed" the signing of the agreement, noting it as "an important milestone in the bilateral economic relationship." "Both leaders acknowledged that CEPA shall be mutually beneficial to both countries, and they encouraged the private sector of both countries to benefit from this agreement. The two leaders agreed that CEPA will increase the trade between the two countries by reducing trade barriers and creating a stable framework," the statement read. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of Maritime Heritage and Museums was also signed to establish collaborative partnerships supporting Maritime Museums, including the National Maritime Heritage Complex in Lothal. The MoU will further facilitate the exchange of artefacts and expertise, joint exhibitions, research, and capacity building to promote shared maritime heritage, boost tourism, and strengthen cultural ties, the document stated.

CHINA EASTERN AIRLINES TO LAUNCH DAILY NON-STOP DELHI-SHANGHAI FLIGHTS FROM JANUARY 2

Diary Times Desk : The Chinese Embassy in India on Thursday announced that China Eastern Airlines will launch daily nonstop flights between Delhi and Shanghai starting January 2 next year, describing the move as good news for India-China travellers. In a post on X, the Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India said, "Good news for India-China travelers! Starting January 2, 2026, China Eastern Airlines will launch daily nonstop flights between Delhi and Shanghai. The Kolkata-Kunming route is set to return soon. A new direct connection between Mumbai and Shanghai is also in the works." China Eastern Airlines said the decision to move to daily operations reflects robust passenger demand and its commitment to strengthening air connectivity between India and China. The expansion follows the successful relaunch of the Delhi-Shanghai route in November 2025 after a suspension of nearly five years. Initially, the airline had planned a phased increase in frequency from three to five weekly flights.

ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ARREST SUSPECTS PLANNING ISIS TRAINING ABROAD

Diary Times Desk : Two residents of northern Israel were arrested for suspected involvement in the Islamic State terror group, the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) and Israel Police announced on Wednesday. Arrested in recent weeks were 20-year-old Kinan Azaiza of the Nazareth-area town of Daburiyya and a second resident of Akko. According to the authorities, both suspects were believed to have been in contact with foreign ISIS operatives and were preparing to travel illegally abroad for terrorist training. Authorities said the individuals had taken steps to carry out security-related activities on behalf of the organisation.

During questioning, investigators determined that Azaiza had sworn allegiance to ISIS, expressed willingness to conduct security operations, and had considered targeting Israeli soldiers. He also reportedly communicated with foreign ISIS elements, learned to manufacture explosives, and planned to travel overseas for further training. Officials noted that the arrests come amid an increased threat from ISIS supporters in Israel and a rise in involvement by Israeli Arabs in terrorism, particularly in the context of the ongoing war.

CHINA DETAINS ABOUT 80 TIBETANS AFTER PROTEST AGAINST ILLEGAL GOLD MINING IN KARDZE



Diary Times Desk : Chinese officials in Kashi village, Kham Zachuka, Sersbul County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, arrested about 80 Tibetans following a protest against illegal gold mining operations, with seven individuals still unaccounted for, according to a report by Phayul. This information was announced by Tempa Gyaltsen Zamlha, Deputy Director and environmental researcher at the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI), during a press conference on Tuesday in Dharamshala. The detentions occurred on November 6 at around 6:50 pm after local Tibetans confronted the miners and informed township authorities about gold extraction that had been discovered the previous day, November 5, at 2:11 pm, in an area locally known as Serkhok (Gold Valley), as reported by Phayul. Following the confrontation, Chinese authorities initiated what residents described as "systematic, door-to-door arrests" in Kashi village. Those apprehended were reportedly taken to Sersbul County for questioning. The arrests were marked by a communications blackout, increased security presence and strict limitations on movement throughout the region.

ISRAELI SCIENTISTS DISCOVER TINY VIRAL SWITCH THAT COULD FIGHT ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT BACTERIA

Diary Times Desk : A tiny viral switch discovered by Israeli and American scientists could open a new front in the fight against antibiotic-resistant infections, a global health threat projected to kill up to 10 million people annually by 2050. Scientists at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have revealed that bacteriophages--viruses that infect bacteria--use a small RNA molecule to hijack bacterial cells, a mechanism that had never been described before, offering fresh insights for future phage-based therapies. The study, led by Sahar Melamed and her team, including PhD student Aviezer Silverman, MSc student Raneem Nashef, and computational biologist Reut Wasserman, in collaboration with Prof. Ido Golding from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, focused on a tiny viral RNA called PreS. Unlike most prior research, which concentrated on viral proteins, this study showed that even one of the most studied phages, lambda.

RAJNATH SINGH MEETS NETHERLANDS' FOREIGN MINISTER; LETTER OF INTENT ON DEFENCE COOPERATION INKED

Diary Times Desk : Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met with the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, David Van Weel, in New Delhi on Thursday, reaffirming the strong and growing defence partnership between the two countries. Both Ministers discussed a range of bilateral security and defence issues, including priority areas for co-development and co-production of defence equipment, the Ministry of Defence stated. They also reaffirmed the commitment to enhance military-to-military cooperation with a focus on developing defence cooperation as a key pillar of the Strategic Partnership. The ministers highlighted the "shared commitment of India and the Netherlands to a free, open, inclusive, and rule-based Indo-Pacific region," adding that they also emphasised the need for a "closer defence partnership and connecting the defence industries from both nations."

GERMAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES \$3.1 BILLION EXPANSION OF ARROW 3 MISSILE DEFENCE DEAL WITH ISRAEL

Diary Times Desk : The German Bundestag has approved an expansion of the deal to purchase Israel's Arrow 3 missile defence system, adding an estimated USD 3.1 billion to what is already the largest defence export agreement in Israel's history, Israel's Ministry of Defence announced n Wednesday.

The expansion completes a USD 3.6 billion sale signed two years ago, bringing the total value of the Arrow 3 deal between Israel and Germany to more than USD 6.7 billion. According to the ministry, the agreement represents the highest-value defence deal ever reached by the State of Israel.

Arrow 3 is an exo-atmospheric missile defence system designed to intercept long-range ballistic missiles. It was jointly developed by the Defence Ministry's Missile Defence Agency, the US Missile Defence Agency, and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), which serves as the prime contractor for development and production. The system scored its first operational success when it shot down a ballistic missile fired by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen in November 2023. It is widely believed to be the first time a missile was intercepted in outer space, though Israeli officials have not confirmed this. Under the expanded agreement, the Israeli and German defence ministries have agreed to significantly increase the production rate of Arrow 3 interceptors and launchers.



INDIA SHUTS DOWN VISA APPLICATION CENTRES IN BANGLADESH'S KHUNA, RAJSHAHI DUE TO PROTESTS

Diary Times Desk : India has shut down visa application centres in Khulna and Rajshahi in Bangladesh due to anti-India protests, an official of the High Commission of India in Dhaka said on Thursday. "There were protests in Khulna and Rajshahi today. Whenever the security situation turns bad, we are forced to shut down. We have shut down visa centres in Khulna and Rajshahi," an official at the High Commission of India in Dhaka told ANI. "We have resumed the visa application centre in Dhaka," he added. In Rajshahi, the anti-Indian hegemony platform "July 36 Mancha" organised a march toward the Indian Assistant High Commission. On Thursday at around 12:30 pm (local time), the march began from Bhadra Mor in the city and proceeded toward the office of the Indian Assistant High Commission. However, the programme was disrupted midway due to police obstruction. As per the prior announcement, when the march started, police stopped the procession by setting up barricades about 100 metres before the Assistant High Commission office. The participants then staged a sit-in in front of the barricades and requested permission to move forward. Similar protests have also been called in Khulna.

CDS GENERAL DWIVEDI OUTLINES 'IKIGAI' FRAMEWORK TO DEEPEN INDO-PACIFIC LAND FORCES COOPERATION AT 3RD LAND FORCES SUMMIT

Diary Times Desk : Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi on Thursday addressed the 3rd Land Forces Summit hosted by the Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF), where he outlined the 'IKIGAI' Framework as a roadmap for enhancing land power cooperation among Indo-Pacific nations.

According to the Army's Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADG PI), General Dwivedi delivered his address virtually at the summit, which was attended by Chiefs of Armies and senior military leaders from Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia and the United States.

During his address, the Army Chief proposed the 'IKIGAI' Framework, underscoring a shared, structured approach to strengthening multilateral military collaboration across the Indo-Pacific. The framework focuses on enhancing interoperability, cooperation and collective preparedness among regional land forces.

VI SUBSIDIARY VITIL COMPLETES RS 3,300 CRORE FUNDRAISE VIA ISSUANCE OF NCD

Diary Times Desk : Vi (Vodafone Idea) on Thursday announced the successful fundraise of Rs 3,300 crore through the issuance of unlisted, unrated, secured Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs), issued by Vodafone Idea Telecom Infrastructure Limited (VITIL), its subsidiary entity. The fundraise saw strong interest exceeding the NCD issuance, from a diversified group of marquee investors, including large Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs). The proceeds from this issuance will be utilized by VITIL to repay its payment obligations to Vi. This will enable Vi to bolster its capex and support business growth. Speaking on the development, Abhijit Kishore, CEO, Vi said, "This fresh fundraise reinforces investor confidence in our strategy and long-term vision. This capital strengthens our momentum as we continue to scale our network and enhance services for our customers. Discussions relating to long-term debt raise to support capex are ongoing with banks." JM Financial Products Ltd. acted as the exclusive Debt Arranger in relation to this fundraise.

INDIA SUGAR INDUSTRY SEEKS MSP REVISION, HIGHER ETHANOL PRICES TO TACKLE SURPLUS STOCK

Diary Times Desk : The Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) has flagged concerns over surplus sugar stocks and falling prices, urging the central government to revise the minimum support price (MSP) of sugar and ethanol procurement prices to protect farmers and mills. Speaking on the current situation, Deepak Ballani, Director General, ISMA, said, "The most important request of the government is the revision of minimum support price of sugar. As we all know that the MSP was not revised for last six years." Talking to ANI on the sidelines of the Annual General Meeting of ISMA, he noted that the industry is facing a "typical problem of excess stock" this year, with sugar production estimated at around 34 million tons, while domestic consumption remains sluggish. According to Ballani, domestic consumption is almost 28.5 lakh tons.

STOCK MARKETS TRADE LOWER IN EARLY DEALS

Diary Times Desk : Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty edged lower in early trade on Thursday tracking a weak trend in global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 214.87 points to 84,344.78 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 56.1 points to 25,762.45. From the Sensex firms, Sun Pharma, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, Bharat Electronics and Maruti were among the biggest laggards. However, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra and ITC were among the gainers. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted lower, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index traded in positive territory. US markets ended lower on Wednesday. "Global markets enter today's session on a cautious footing following a sharp overnight sell-off in the US. The S&P 500, Nasdaq, and Dow extended their losing streak as investors booked profits in high-valuation technology and AI stocks. "Investor sentiment also remains cautious ahead of the release of US consumer price inflation data, with divided views in the market over the future trajectory of monetary policy, prompting participants to stay defensive and avoid aggressive positioning," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. Asian markets opened on a weak note, mirroring the subdued tone on Wall Street after several sessions of sustained selling, he added.



INDIA-OMAN SET TO SIGN FTA, MOVE TO DEEPEN ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT WITH GULF

Diary Times Desk : India is set to sign a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Oman, marking a major step in deepening India's economic engagement with the Gulf region. This is Oman's second FTA with an individual country and the first FTA the country is signing in about 20 years. Indian official sources said the agreement is expected to enhance market access, promote investments, and strengthen cooperation across key sectors. "It will support trade diversification and supply chain resilience at a time of global economic realignment," they added. This is the sixth major FTA India is signing. In the last few years, India has signed many FTAs which are reaping rewards for our farmers, traders and exporters. The following FTAs have been signed: United Kingdom (2025): CETA is reducing tariffs on more than 90% of traded goods and significantly expand bilateral trade. EFTA (2024): Trade and economic partnership with Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, supported by strong investment commitments into India. Australia (2022): ECTA cutting or eliminating tariffs on most traded goods and opening new opportunities for Indian exports. UAE (2022): CEPA reducing tariffs on over 90% of Indian exports, boosting trade in gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, and engineering goods. Mauritius (2021): India's first Africa-focused trade pact, improving market access and positioning Mauritius as a gateway to Africa.



PUNJAB ATTRACTS RS 500 CRORE R&D INVESTMENT FROM AMBER GROUP AT RAJPURA

Diary Times Desk : Punjab continues to emerge as a preferred destination for advanced manufacturing and innovation, with Amber Group of Industries announcing a major expansion through the establishment of a state-of-the-art Research & Development Centre at Rajpura, involving an investment of Rs 500 crore. Welcoming the investment, Cabinet Minister for Industries & Commerce, Investment Promotion, Power and NRI Affairs, Punjab, Sanjeev Arora, said, "The decision of Amber Group to set up a large-scale R&D Centre at Rajpura with an investment of Rs 500 crore is a strong endorsement of Punjab's progressive industrial policies, skilled manpower and investor-friendly ecosystem. This project will create around 1,000 high-quality, well-paid jobs and significantly strengthen Punjab's position in advanced engineering and product design. He said Amber Group of Industries is a leading diversified manufacturing conglomerate with 33 manufacturing facilities and 12 sales offices in India and overseas, having an annual revenue of around Rs 10, 000 crore and a market capitalisation of approximately Rs 27,000 crore. The Group operates across key sectors, including PCBs, air conditioners, power electronics, HVAC systems, railways, defence, buses and precision cooling solutions for critical infrastructure. Highlighting Punjab's growing role in innovation-led manufacturing, the Minister said, "This new R&D facility will focus on designing, validation and testing of next-generation HVAC products for both domestic and export markets."



NEW LOGO UNVEILED FOR REGIONAL RURAL BANKS TO BUILD UNIFIED BRAND IDENTITY

Diary Times Desk : The Government of India has unveiled a new and common logo for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs). This step aims to create a single and unified brand identity for these banking institutions, the Finance Ministry said on Thursday. According to the Ministry of Finance, this initiative marks a crucial move toward strengthening the identity and visibility of the banks that serve rural communities across the nation. This fresh branding strategy comes in the wake of a major amalgamation drive undertaken by the government. The Department of Financial Services, under the Ministry of Finance, has consolidated 26 Regional Rural Banks across 11 States and Union Territories. This consolidation is based on the principle of "One State One RRB." The reform is designed to build stronger and more efficient banks. The changes from this consolidation will be effective from May 1, 2025. At present, there are 28 RRBs that continue to serve the country. These banks operate through an extensive network that includes over 22,000 branches covering more than 700 districts.

RIISING TRAVEL COSTS DRIVE INDIANS TO MAXIMISE CREDIT CARD REWARDS THROUGH FLIGHT REDEMPTIONS: REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Flight redemptions have emerged as the most preferred use of credit card reward points in India in 2025, overtaking cashback, according to a report by AI-driven credit card and loyalty optimisation platform SaveSage. The report said nearly one-third of all reward points redeemed by its users were used for flights or airline mile transfers, accounting for a 32 per cent share of total redemptions. The shift reflects growing consumer awareness around maximising reward value amid rising travel costs. The company said users redeemed travel rewards worth Rs 850 crore in 2025. Business-class seats, long-haul flights, and luxury hotel stays witnessed strong growth as consumers opted for higher-value redemptions. Based on an analysis of anonymised data from over 110,000 users and more than 5 lakh credit cards, the report noted that travel delivered the highest rewards.

RAHUL GANDHI'S MANUFACTURING DIP CHARGE FAKE: BJP, CITES DATA

Diary Times Desk : The BJP on Thursday strongly countered as fake Rahul Gandhi's claim about a dip in Indian manufacturing. BJP spokesperson Amit Malviya said. Rahul Gandhi's claim that production in India has gone down is fake. "The claim that production in India has declined is not supported by available data. Over the past decade, India's manufacturing base, particularly in electronics and mobile phones, has expanded substantially, and the country has emerged as a net exporter in several key sectors. India is now a net exporter in sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, and defence," Malviya said. He cited data to make his point: "Manufacturing remains one of the largest employment-generating sectors in India, particularly for semi-skilled and skilled workers. Approximately 17 crore jobs created in the past decade," Malviya said. He quoted from the periodic labour force survey of August 2025 to say that worker population ratio is 52.2%; female worker population ratio 32%; female labour force participation rate 33.7% and unemployment rate 5.1% overall; 5.0% for males and manufacturing job growth increased from 6% during 2004-14 to 15% in the last decade.



"GOOD TIME FOR INDIA, SOUTH KOREA TO UPGRADE THEIR CEPA": DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION SANG-WOO LIM



Diary Times Desk : The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) of the Korean Embassy in India, Sang-Woo Lim, on Thursday said this is a good time for India and South Korea to consider upgrading their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

"This is a great time to strengthen Korea-India trade relations further. Korea and India have had a CEPA in place for the last 10 years. This is a good time to consider upgrading our CEPA," he said. "It is about time to have the second wave of Korean investments in India, especially in strategic areas, such as shipbuilding, semiconductors, and the defence industry. I do see some positive movements in that direction," he added.

"India is reviewing and upgrading the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) that it has with other countries. We're looking at doing the same kind of approach," he said. Highlighting the growing bilateral relations, the DCM said, "In 2023, around 100,000 Koreans came to India and vice versa. That figure in 2025 has doubled. We have 200,000 Koreans coming to India and 200,000 Indians going to Korea. So it shows over the past three years, we have a lot more business going on between our two countries." He further talked about the decades-old business relations between both countries and said, "Korean companies have been in India ever since the 90s. When India first went through the economic reforms, Korean big companies were the first ones to come. Now it's been 30 years, and companies like LG, Samsung, have settled down very well in India and feel like an Indian company."

TOURIST INFLUX, LANE
JUMPING CAUSE CHAOS ON
ROHTANG PASS ROAD

Diary Times Desk : A massive traffic jam brought the scenic route from Gramphu (Lahaul)-Rohtang Pass road to a standstill on Wednesday as authorities officially allowed 4X4 vehicles to travel beyond Marhi until on December 18. The sudden influx of tourist vehicles eager to access the higher reaches, combined with traffic mismanagement, resulted in hours-long jams, sparking outrage among stranded commuters who are now demanding strict action against traffic rule violators, especially lane jumpers. The road between Manali to Palchan has been damaged at many stretches and these have become bottlenecks creating jams. The road leads to Atal Tunnel from Solang side and towards Rohtang from Kothi side. Though only 1,200 vehicles are allowed to cross the Gulaba barrier, a large number of tourists flock Gulaba and Sissu. The crisis was particularly grave on the Hadimba Temple Road, a key arterial route. To avoid the snarls there, many drivers diverted towards the Log Huts pathway, only to find themselves trapped in another nightmare.

NGT GRANTS INTERIM STAY
ON PUNJAB'S FARMHOUSE
POLICY FOR SHIVALIK HILLS;
NEXT HEARING ON FEBRUARY

4

Diary Times Desk : National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday granted an interim stay on the implementation of the Punjab government's policy to allow approval and regularisation of low-impact green habitats in the lower Shivalik hills, abutting forest areas. The policy has been stayed until the next date of hearing, February 4. The policy, which affects nearly 55,000 hectares taken out of the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), 1900, would benefit VIPs, including politicians and serving and retired bureaucrats. This land had recently been notified under the policy for farmhouses. The petitioner, Kapil Dev, challenged the policy, alleging that it violated the Supreme Court's directions regarding land taken out of the purview of the PLPA. He said the policy contradicted guidelines set by the Supreme Court while delisting around 55,000 hectares of land from the PLPA. According to him, the court had allowed delisting only for bonafide agricultural use.

SANJAULI MOSQUE ROW: DEMOLITION OF ILLEGAL FLOORS BEGINS IN SHIMLA

Diary Times Desk : The Sanjauli Mosque Committee and Himachal Pradesh Waqf Board started demolishing the unauthorised top floors of the mosque in Sanjauli, Shimla, following the high court orders. The court directed demolition of the top three floors, deemed illegal by the Shimla Municipal Commissioner's court. Earlier, the committee demolished two floors on the Commissioner's orders, but work stopped after a district court challenge. The district court upheld demolition, but the Waqf Board appealed to the high court. The high court maintained status quo on the first two floors and directed demolition of the rest. The Waqf Board says they'll complete demolition soon, citing financial constraints earlier halted work. The next hearing is on March 9. A local group, Devbhoomi Sangharsh Samiti, had demanded immediate demolition and offered to volunteer for the work.



HIMACHAL CM SUKHU INAUGURATES
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WORTH RS 69 CRORE IN
GHUMARWIN

Diary Times Desk : Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu laid the foundation stone and inaugurated development projects worth approximately Rs 69 crore in Ghumarwin Assembly constituency in district Bilaspur today. These included inauguration of the Ghumarwin Police Station constructed at a cost of Rs 4.82 crore and the check dam and deck built over the Seer Khad at a cost of Rs. 3.67 crore. He laid the foundation stones of several projects, including construction of a multi-purpose sports complex to be constructed near Tikkari Helipad near Ghumarwin to be built at an estimated cost of Rs 6.08 crore and family quarters for police to be built near Ghumarwin Police Station at a cost of Rs 6 crore. He laid the foundation stone of upgrade of the seven-km-long Amarpur-Hadsar-Dahad-Jaman-Ghumarwin road at a cost of Rs. 6.13 crore, upgradation of the 31-kilometre-long Ghumarwin-Barthin-Shah Talai road at an estimated cost of Rs 34.95 crore and construction of a 68 metre jeepable span bridge over the Seer Khad on the Badi Majhedwan-Dahad-Panol road at Badi Majhedwan, to be built at a cost of Rs 6.80 crore. Earlier, on his arrival in Ghumarwin, the Chief Minister was accorded a warm welcome by the local people.

HIMACHAL HC TAKES NOTE OF SUSPENSION
OF FLIGHT OPS, SEEKS AFFIDAVITS

Diary Times Desk : The Himachal Pradesh High Court has taken note of the suspension of flight operations to all three airports in the state, after documents to this effect were placed on record by the Amicus Curiae appointed by the court to assist it on this issue. During the course of hearing, the court was informed about two high-level meetings held on November 6, 2025 and November 20, 2025, chaired respectively by the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh and the Principal Secretary (Tourism and Civil Aviation) to the Government of Himachal Pradesh, to review the issue. Considering the material placed before it, a division bench comprising Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia and Justice Jiya Lal Bhardwaj ordered the impleadment of the Principal Secretary (Tourism and Civil Aviation), Government of Himachal Pradesh, as respondent in the matter and directed the Registry to carry out necessary corrections. The Bench further directed that affidavits be filed by the Union of India as well as by the newly impleaded respondent Principal Secretary (Tourism and Civil Aviation) before the next date of hearing. The matter has been listed for further consideration on January 8, 2026. The proceedings highlight the court's concern over the impact of flight suspensions on connectivity.



YOUR HOROSCOPE

19-12-2025



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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

HC QUESTIONS CBI'S MINDSET, FLAGS DISINTEREST WHEN ASKED TO TAKE OVER INVESTIGATIONS

Diary Times Desk : Taking note of the CBI's varying stands, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has asserted that the premier agency on one hand is vehemently claiming its right to investigate cases where States dispute its jurisdiction. On the other, it adopts a non-committal and disinterested approach when courts seek its response on taking over investigations. The assertion came after Justice Vinod S Bhardwaj observed that the CBI, in its inimitable style – reflecting a complete disinterest in accepting an assignment – pleaded lack of resources and an unwillingness to accept any further investigation. "This court finds the conduct of Central Bureau of Investigation completely strange in as much while it is contesting tooth and nail to claim right to investigate the matters with the States, who are often reluctant or dispute jurisdiction of the CBI over the subject. However, in almost all the cases when the court asked for a response, the reply is always non-committal reflecting a disinterested investigating agency," Justice Bhardwaj asserted.

PUNJAB NOTIFIES UNIFIED BUILDING BYLAWS: STILT-PLUS-FOUR FLOORS ALLOWED IN ALL NEW RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Diary Times Desk : The Punjab Government has notified new unified building bylaws, allowing stilt-plus-four floors in all new residential areas coming up in urban areas across the state. Passed by the Punjab cabinet on October 28, the rules have now been notified. Under the bylaws, plots measuring up to 200 sq yards can come up on roads having a minimum width of 30 feet and for plots above 200 sq yard, the minimum road width should be 40 feet. The bylaws have already attracted criticism from town planners and architects, who feel it would lead to chaos and densification in urban areas. In already planned areas, the government has allowed stilt plus three. The move will pave the way for the government to implement law to allow implantation of the Apartment Act in the state, which will allow people to buy separate floors in houses, as subdivision of land is currently not permitted. Initially, the government planned to allow the stilt- plus-four floor scheme in all urban areas.

DETAINED MP AMRITPAL SINGH MISSES WINTER SESSION AS HIGH COURT TERMS PLEA INFRUCTUOUS

Diary Times Desk : Detained Member of Parliament Amritpal Singh will not be able to attend the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament, with the Punjab and Haryana High Court holding that his petition seeking permission to do so had virtually become infructuous. At the very outset, a Bench headed by Chief Justice Sheel Nagu questioned the very executability of any order, even if it were to be passed in the petitioner's favour. The Bench noted that the logistical reality of transporting the detainee from Dibrugarh in Assam to Delhi made the relief impracticable, observing that the distance was such that it would take at least 10 hours even by helicopter, if not more. In these circumstances, the court observed that the petitioner could always approach the court again when a fresh cause of action arose, effectively suggesting that the issue be agitated in a future parliamentary session. In its detailed order, the Bench also recorded that an effective hearing could not take place on December 15, 16 and 17 due to abstention from work by lawyers. The court noted that even on the day of hearing, while counsel for Amritpal Singh appeared, the arguments on behalf of the respondents remained inconclusive.



HARYANA FACTORY COUNT SHRINKS BY 1,446 IN 5 YEARS; PUNJAB HOLDS STEADY

Diary Times Desk : Despite the Nayab Singh Saini government's much-touted ease of doing business initiatives, Haryana's industrial landscape continues to shrink, with the state recording 10,389 registered factories in 2023-24, a decline of 214 units from the previous year's 10,603. In contrast, neighbouring Punjab has maintained relative stability with 13,166 registered factories in 2023-24, a marginal decline of 62 units from 13,228 a year earlier, while also registering impressive growth over the past five years. Surprisingly, this marks the fifth consecutive year of decline for Haryana's industrial base since its peak in 2018-19, when the state had 11,835 factories. The downward trend reflects a cumulative loss of 1,446 factories, or 12.2 per cent, over the past five years, raising concerns about the state's industrial competitiveness, according to data sourced by the Reserve Bank of India from the Annual Survey of Industries released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The data shows that while Haryana lost 1,446 factories since 2018-19, Punjab added 341 units during the same period. Despite recent setbacks, Haryana has shown substantial long-term growth, rising from 4,339 factories in 2004-05.

GOVT ROLLS OUT NEW RECRUITMENT REGIME FOR POLICE CONSTABLES, SIS

Diary Times Desk : The Nayab Singh Saini government has introduced a new recruitment regime for the appointment of constables and sub-inspectors in the Haryana Police. Issuing a notification of the Punjab Police (Haryana Amendment) Rules, 2025, which amend the Punjab Police Rules, 1934, Sumita Misra, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), said under the revised rules, the weightage for the knowledge test has been pegged at 97 per cent. "The Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC) shall shortlist candidates equal to 10 times the number of advertised posts from among those who have qualified the physical measurement test and physical screening test to appear in the knowledge test," the notification stated. In addition, candidates possessing National Cadet Corps (NCC) certificates will be given additional weightage of up to three marks for both constable and sub-inspector posts. Candidates holding NCC 'A', 'B' and 'C' certificates will be awarded one, two and three marks, respectively. The notification said the question paper would include questions on general studies, general science, current affairs, general reasoning, mental aptitude.

CITING 'VOTE CHORI', 'ANTI-PEOPLE POLICIES', CONGRESS BRINGS NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION AGAINST HARYANA GOVT



Diary Times Desk : Congress MLAs submitted a no-confidence motion against Haryana's BJP government led by Nayab Singh Saini, citing issues like vote stealing, unemployment, rising crime, and poor infrastructure. The motion, submitted to Speaker Harvinder Kalyan, alleges the government has failed due to anti-people policies and weak management. It will come up for discussion on Friday. In the motion, the MLAs alleged, "The current government has completely failed due to its anti-people policies and weak management. It has lost the trust of every section of the state's population. Through its various systems, this government has transformed 'Loktantra' into 'Tantralok'. This insensitive and unresponsive government, built on the use of machines and machinery, has lost people's confidence. Due to the government's tunnel vision, the state is rapidly and relentlessly hurtling towards a dark, hellish abyss of crime, drug abuse, unemployment, illiteracy, inequality, and environmental degradation." It referred to rising crime with an indirect reference to IPS Y Puran Kumar's suicide too. The motion said, "Murder, rape, kidnapping, and robbery have become commonplace. The police are helpless. The suicides of senior police officers highlight this fact.

Drones have already revolutionized warfare.
They're about to do it again

"nvention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos." Mary Shelley, "Frankenstein," 1818.

"War is chaos. It always has been. But technology makes it worse. It changes the fear." Pierce Brown, "Golden Son," 2015.

Drones – and artificial intelligence – have reshaped the modern battlefield and are about to do so again. Nowhere is that more evident than in Ukraine.

Invaded by Russia in 2022, outmanned and outgunned by one of the world's strongest militaries, Kyiv quickly proved that drones – in the air, on the ground, and at sea – could hold off a Russian victory that many expected within weeks, if not days.



Hilary Whiteman
Yoti advises social media platforms including Meta about their age verification options. The group now has 12 methods, including phone, email, and ID checks, and the list is growing. Age-restricted sites give users a choice about which method they'd prefer.

Cheaper and easier to build than manned vehicles, and in some cases more effective, drones are a military planner's dream – and greatly reduce the risk of a pilot or operator being killed in action.

Brad Lendon
But drones came to the forefront of warfare relatively recently, some analysts say, with the 2020 conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh a major turning point.

Much like the Kalashnikov rifle in the previous century, mass adoption of drones became an asymmetric weapon of choice for forces facing long odds in global warfare, such as the Hamas militant group in Gaza; anti-junta rebels in Myanmar's civil war; and the militaries of poorer nations, including many in Africa.

But the Goliaths have caught up, while – according to one report – drug cartels the world over are innovating, improving and adapting drones to fight the narco-wars of the future. "It's like gunpowder. That's how insanely it's changed the war," Patrick Shepherd, a former US Army officer, said of the advent of cheap aerial drones.

Its invention from chaos, as myriad regional conflagrations coincide with an era of unparalleled technological advance.

It's probably just the beginning.

The evolution of drones

Drones aren't a recent invention. Britain and the United States experimented with radio-controlled unmanned aircraft during World War I, according to the Imperial War Museum in London.

"We were flying hundreds of drones over North Vietnam during the war," said Russ Lee, a curator in the aeronautics department at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington. During that Southeast Asian conflict in 1960s and early '70s, US forces began using drones for many of the same missions we see today – reconnaissance or carrying munitions, or for use as decoys and psy-ops platforms, according to the Imperial War Museum.

The US began widespread use of drones during Operation Desert Storm, the response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The Tomahawk land-attack missile – a cruise missile but also an unmanned aerial vehicle as it can change course and target in-flight – saw its first combat in 1991.



Australia's About To Find Out

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU KICK MILLIONS OF TEENS OFF SOCIAL MEDIA?

It's August, and a show of hands in an auditorium filled with 300 students at All Saints Anglican School in Australia shows that few of the Grade 9 and 10 students sitting in plush red seats had heard of the country's impending ban on social media, much less how to prepare for it.



"People have basically thought, what is it we do offline? Do we let young people into strip clubs, into bars, buying alcohol, buying cigarettes? What are the norms that we have and what are the norms that we want to have online?"

"It's very important to save photos," Kirra Pendergast, founder of cyber safety organization Ctrl+Shift, lectures from the stage. "You need to prepare."

An alarmed murmur spreads around the room as the students realize what's about to be lost. "Can you get your account back when you turn 16?" one girl asks. "What if I lie about my age?" asks another.

Less than two weeks before the ban, we have more answers.

From December 10, sites

that meet the Australian government's definition of an "age-restricted social media platform" will need to show that they're doing enough to eject or block children under 16 or face fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$32 million).

The list includes Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, X, and YouTube. The government says it's protecting children from potentially harmful content; the sites say they're already building safer systems.

Meta says it'll start deactivating accounts and blocking new Facebook, Instagram and Threads accounts from December 4. Under-16s are being encouraged to download their content.

Snap says users can deactivate their accounts for up to three years, or until they turn 16. Snap streaks – the daily swapping of photos of ordinary life, vacations, walls, foreheads, anything to signal an online presence – will end.

There's another sting in the ban, too, coming at the end of the Australian school year before the summer break in the southern hemisphere. For eight weeks, there'll be no school, no teachers – and no scrolling.

For millions of children, it could be the first school break they spend in years without the company of time-killing social media algorithms, or an easy way to contact their friends. Even for parents who support the ban, it could be a very long summer.

Other countries around the world are taking notes as Australia explores new territory that some say mirrors safety evolutions of years past – the dawning realization that maybe cars need safety belts, and that perhaps cigarettes should come with some kind of health warning.

As with any seismic step in social policy, there are cheer squads, naysayers and those who don't care what Australia – a country known to love rules – is doing to (and for) its children.

INFA

A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

SRI LANKA'S BLOODY PAST IS RE-EMERGING FROM THE SOIL

Two human skeletons lie entangled on the rough earth – the arms of one wrapped around the other's head, as though protecting them from danger. Simply known as numbers 177 and 178, their identities remain a mystery. They are among 240 human skeletal remains, including children and babies, uncovered at this mass gravesite in Chemmani in Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna district. "This place is a crime scene no entry," reads a sign at the entrance. Numbered white cards placed alongside the bones mark how many skeletons have been found since digging began in May of this year, reviving decades-old allegations of wartime atrocities and cover-ups. In the heartland of the country's ethnic Tamil minority, a bloody and brutal history is re-emerging from the soil. But it is difficult to bury the past entirely. From 1983 to 2009, the South Asian island nation of 21 million endured a brutal civil war between the Sri Lankan army and the separatist militant group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). More commonly known as the Tamil Tigers, the group was listed as a terrorist organization by many countries including the United States.



Tamils, who have lived in the north and east of Sri Lanka for thousands of years, are primarily followers of Hinduism, with a significant Christian minority population, but the commission determined that the fact the bodies were buried naked rules out customary Hindu burials. "There is a reasonable likelihood that the burials were unlawful and pursuant to extrajudicial killings," it said.

The war was fought along ethnic lines, pitting the majority Buddhist Sinhalese state against the predominantly Hindu ethnic minority rebels fighting for a separate Tamil homeland in the north and east after years of anti-Tamil violence. The Tigers were ultimately defeated. Atrocities were committed by both sides, according to the United Nations, which estimates up to 100,000 people were killed in the conflict, with thousands of others forcibly disappeared.

Sixteen years after the war ended, families of the victims and missing are still fighting for justice and accountability.

"One day the truth will come," said V S Niranjan, a lawyer representing relatives of people who went missing in Jaffna.

A blue school bag

Just a stone's throw from a main road, the Chemmani gravesite is one of more than 20 mass graves identified in Sri Lanka. Many of the gravesites that pockmark the north and east of the country are believed to contain the victims of atrocities committed during the civil war. Caught between warring rebel fighters and the Sri Lankan army, the Tamil community in these regions bore the brunt of the violence.

The military occupied Jaffna from 1995 until the end of the war. Chemmani first gained international attention in 1998 when Sri Lankan soldier former Lance Cpl. Somaratne Rajapakse, who was on trial for the rape and murder of schoolgirl Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, confessed that hundreds of Tamils had been buried there after the Sri Lankan army retook Jaffna.

For decades, the mass grave remained hidden until construction workers clearing land in the grounds of a Hindu cemetery in February unearthed human skeletal remains.

Their discovery prompted a court-ordered forensic excavation of the site in May and June, which initially uncovered 19 skeletons. Since then, the bones of hundreds more people have been found. A baby's milk bottle, a blue schoolbag, bangles and cloth fragments have been uncovered alongside the bones.

More than 90% of the remains had no form of clothing. The bodies were buried in a disordered way, heaped together in shallow graves of 1.5-2 feet, according to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, an independent national body that investigates violations of fundamental rights.



BEST ART EXHIBITIONS IN 2026: LONDON

Diary Times Desk : The British Museum is gathering almost 300 objects – from ceramics to woodblock prints, textiles, arms, photographs and more – to trace the 1,000-year-long evolution of one of Japan’s most fascinating phenomena: the samurai.

Emerging as aristocratic soldiers-for-hire, samurai began to exert their own political dominance from the 12th century onwards. From 1615, peacetime saw many pivot to government roles, or become scholars and patrons of the arts. By the late 19th century, their hereditary status had been abolished.

One cornerstone exhibit is a suit of armour acquired by the museum in 2017 from a private collection in Kyoto. The helmet – traditionally passed down through generations – was constructed from iron, silk, wool, leather, gold and lacquer in 1519 by the prestigious armourer Myōchin Nobuie. The cuirass, which dates from 1696, shows stylistic elements borrowed from Portuguese armour. Another highlight is a portrait by Domenico Tintoretto, the son of Jacopo Tintoretto, depicting Itō Mancio – a 13-year-old samurai who held court at the Vatican during Japan’s first diplomatic mission to Europe in 1582.

Lucian Freud is remembered as one of the great figurative painters of the 20th (and early 21st) century. This new exhibition, however, will turn attention to the importance of drawing in the artist’s oeuvre. He drew obsessively throughout his career, working with pen, pencil, charcoal, Conté crayon and etching needle (he regarded etching as a ‘form of drawing’).

The show will feature 170 works. Some of them are sketches or drawings in their own right, though focus will also be placed on pieces with a direct relationship to specific paintings – in other words, how Freud’s work in one medium (as a draughtsman) connected to his work in another (as a painter).

In the early 1980s, for example, he produced preparatory sketches for the stunning group portrait of his extended family, Large Interior, WII (after Watteau). Interestingly, he also produced several sketches after the painting was completed, as if not quite ready to say goodbye to it.

Owing to his early death – at the age of 31, probably from diphtheria – Georges Seurat left behind a relatively small body of work, and solo exhibitions devoted to him are rare. There’s no denying his importance in the canon of Western art, however: he was, alongside his friend Paul Signac, the pioneer of the Neo-Impressionist movement.



COLLECTING GUIDE: AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM

Diary Times Desk :

In the late 19th century, a period that witnessed the full flowering of the Impressionist movement, a handful of American artists – including Guy Rose, Frederick Frieeseke, Theodore Earl Butler, Robert Vonnoh, Willard Metcalf, Jane Peterson, Theodore Robinson and Lila Cabot Perry and Louis Ritman – travelled to France. Many studied at the prestigious Académie Julian art school in Paris, and a number moved to Giverny to join the artist’s colony established by Monet.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, most of the American artists at Giverny returned home. There, many continued to paint in the Impressionist style, translating techniques first explored in France to American scenes.

Who are the key artists to know?

John Leslie Breck is widely credited with introducing Impressionism to American audiences. After working in Giverny, where he was briefly engaged to Monet’s stepdaughter Blanche, he returned to his native Boston, holding a solo exhibition at the city’s St. Botolph Club in 1890. When back in the French countryside in 1891, Breck was painted by his friend and fellow Impressionist painter James Carroll Beckwith. He exhibited again in 1893, prompting a local critic to dub Breck ‘the head of the American Impressionists’.

Considered to have been the leader of the Boston School, Frank Weston Benson is known for his pictures of New England, painted en plein air. This technique was also favoured by William Merritt Chase, the artist and teacher, who founded what became the Parsons School of Design.

Childe Hassam

Perhaps the most famous American Impressionist, however, is Childe Hassam. Although he studied at the Académie Julian, he found it to be ‘the personification of routine’, seeking inspiration, instead, in the city’s bustling streets. Hassam’s New York City imagery reflects his fascination with his urban surroundings and the people he encountered – demonstrating his growing ingenuity with Impressionist technique. Likewise, his paintings from France depicting the Blumenthal garden at Villiers-Le-Bel as well as Parisian rooftops and city-life are among the most important works from his output.



INTER MILAN SUPERSTAR BREAKS SILENCE ON BARCELONA TRANSFER RUMOURS – ‘MAKE ME FEEL PROUD’



Diary Times Desk : As has been well-established by now, FC Barcelona have made the signing of a left-footed centre-back a priority for the summer of 2026. Even though Gerard Martin has proven himself to be a reliable alternative in the position in recent games, Hansi Flick & co. feel it is important to bring in a quality player for the position.

Names such as Nico Schlotterbeck and Pau Torres have been touted as targets, but reports this week have claimed that Inter Milan and Italy superstar Alessandro Bastoni is the ‘chosen one’ for Barcelona. Barça have sounded out Bastoni and have even been in contact with his entourage to explore the possibility of a transfer. Now, Bastoni has broken his silence on the rumours linking him to Barcelona. On being asked about the speculations during the press conference ahead of the Italian Super Cup semi-final between Inter Milan and Bologna, the defender said.

BARCELONA SET SIGHTS ON SERIE A DEFENSIVE HEAVYWEIGHT WITH DECO MEETING HIS AGENT

Diary Times Desk : Even though the summer transfer window is some way away, FC Barcelona have already identified the centre-back position as one of their priority objectives.

The departure of Inigo Martinez has left a gaping hole in the defensive unit, which the Blaugrana intend to fill with a quality, left-footed centre-back.

Names such as Nico Schlotterbeck and Pau Torres have been mentioned as potential targets for the La Liga champions, with a new player now being linked as an option. Indeed, according to Matteo Moretto on Radio MARCA, Inter Milan defensive mainstay Alessandro Bastoni is the ‘chosen one’ at Barcelona to fill the centre-back gap.

The Catalan giants believe that the Italian international is the ideal fit for their project, given his defensive qualities as well as his ball-playing abilities that allow him to initiate attacks from the back. The journalist goes as far as saying that Barcelona director Deco, who was in Milan a few weeks ago, held a meeting with Bastoni’s agent to explore the feasibility of a transfer.

BARCELONA IN NO RUSH TO RENEW VETERAN STAR’S CONTRACT DESPITE TRANSFER NOISE

Diary Times Desk : According to a report from MARCA, despite growing noise around Robert Lewandowski’s future, Barcelona remain remarkably calm about the forward’s contract renewal.

While rumours continue to link the Polish striker with a possible exit, the club is not panicking and is not rushing into any decisions regarding his contract situation. At present, Barcelona have not taken any concrete steps towards renewing Lewandowski’s deal.

This is not due to a lack of respect or confidence in the forward, but rather an approach based on several key factors. The club is noting that he will turn 38 next season, and age is playing a significant role in their thinking. Alongside that, his physical condition is being closely monitored, especially after he has already suffered two injuries during the current campaign. As such, Barcelona want to see how the rest of the season unfolds before making any final call. Performance levels, physical response, and availability will all weigh heavily in the final decision. For now, there is no urgency from the club.

OFFICIAL: DATE SET FOR LAMINE YAMAL VS LIONEL MESSI AS SPAIN TAKE ON ARGENTINA IN FINALISSIMA

Diary Times Desk : Football’s next global showcase now has a date and venue. The Finalissima between Spain and Argentina will take place on March 27, 2026, in Doha, Qatar, setting up a highly anticipated meeting between Barcelona rising star Lamine Yamal and legend Lionel Messi. The match will bring together the reigning European champions and Copa America holders, continuing the tradition revived in 2022 when Argentina defeated Italy at Wembley. This edition, however, carries a generational storyline that has captured Barcelona fans’ attention worldwide. Indeed, beyond the clash of continental champions, the game carries a storyline that resonates deeply with Barcelona supporters as it pits the current face of the team, Lamine, against the greatest ever player to play for the club in Messi.

Comparisons between Yamal and Messi have followed the Spanish winger almost from the moment he broke into the first team. Just 18 years old, he is already counted among the best footballers across the globe and even finished second in the 2025 Ballon d’Or rankings.



SEVERAL BARCELONA STARS TRAIN AT CLUB FACILITIES DESPITE FLICK GIVING THE DAY OFF

Diary Times Desk : FC Barcelona secured a hard-fought 2-0 victory over CD Guadalajara in the Copa del Rey on Tuesday night, securing progression to the Round of 16.

Up next for the La Liga champions is a clash against Villarreal away at Estadio La Ceramica in their final match before the mid-season break.

Following the team’s victory away at Guadalajara, Hansi Flick gave the Barcelona squad Thursday off. Even though a morning training session had initially been scheduled, the coach decided to grant the players an extra day of rest.

Despite that, several first-team players showed up to work at the Ciutat Esportiva this morning voluntarily, reports Mundo Deportivo. Ahead of that match, Flick’s side will hold two training sessions, on Friday and Saturday, to fine-tune their preparation against the Yellow Submarine.

BARCELONA PLOT RAID FOR TEENAGE BELGIAN ATTACKING PRODIGY, TALKS ALREADY HELD

Diary Times Desk : FC Barcelona are taking the search for young talent very seriously and are actively working to secure several high-potential players with the aim of strengthening the reserve team and, in the medium term, also the first team. As already reported, Al Ahly teenage striker Hamza Abdelkarim is a key target for Barça, with an offer already made to sign him on loan in January with a permanent buy option.

Barcelona were alerted to Abdelkarim’s talents at the recent U-17 World Cup, and it appears that another young prospect managed to catch their attention at the tournament. Indeed, according to journalist Sacha Tavolieri, Barcelona are interested in signing Club Brugge’s young left-winger Jesse Bisiwu, who, like Abdelkarim, stood out at the recent U-17 World Cup in Qatar. In fact, Barça’s sporting department has already met with Bisiwu and his entourage to try to convince him to join the club. The plan would be for him to feature primarily with the reserve team while gradually being integrated into first-team dynamics. Bisiwu, who currently plays for Brugge’s reserve team Club NXT, is known for his explosiveness down the wing. His performances for Belgium at the U-17 World Cup did not go unnoticed by Barça or by other clubs.