

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**SC ISSUES NOTICE TO PUNJAB GOVT ON SAD LEADER BIKRAM SINGH MAJITHIA'S PLEA FOR BAIL**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Punjab Vigilance Bureau on Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia's petition challenging the Punjab and Haryana High Court's order denying him bail in a disproportionate assets case. A Bench led by Justice Vikram Nath, however, refused to consider his prayer for interim bail. Asking the Punjab Vigilance Bureau to respond to Majithia's petition challenging the December 4 order of the high court, it posted the matter for hearing on January 19. The high court had dismissed his bail plea, saying the possibility of him influencing the investigation could not be ruled out. Directing the Bureau to complete its probe in three months, the high court had said Majithia could seek bail after that. The Punjab Vigilance Bureau arrested Majithia on June 25 in the disproportionate assets (DA) case that allegedly involved accumulation of Rs 540 crore of wealth. The DA case FIR against Majithia.

**PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED SINE DIE, DELHI POLLUTION DEBATE LEFT HANGING**

**Diary Times Desk :** Parliament was adjourned sine die on Friday, bringing the Winter Session to an abrupt end and shelving the much-anticipated discussion on Delhi's worsening air quality. Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were adjourned indefinitely, preventing MPs from raising urgent concerns about the public health crisis caused by severe pollution in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). The discussion on air pollution had been scheduled for the final day of the Winter Session in the Lok Sabha. MPs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, and Bansuri Swaraj were expected to highlight the dangerous spike in pollutants, including particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), and their impact on respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases and overall public health. Delhi has repeatedly recorded "very poor" air quality levels.

## PM MODI

**PM MODI'S EIGHT POSTS ON X MOST RETWEETED, LIKED ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's eight comments or pictures have become the most liked posts among the top 10 on X in the last 30 days, including his photo with Russian President Vladimir Putin when both leaders travelled together in a car from Delhi's IGI airport, officials said.

The eight posts on X together had 1,60,700 reposts and 14.76 lakh likes, thus becoming the only politician featured among the top 10 most liked and reposted handles on the social media platform.

"X has a new feature. It shows the most-liked tweets in the last month in a country. For India, in the last 30 days, the top eight out of 10 most liked tweets are of PM Modi. No other politician features in the top 10," an official said.

The photo of PM Modi travelling together in a car with Putin after his arrival from Moscow on December 4 had over 34,000 reposts and 2,14,000 likes — the highest among the eight posts of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister presenting a copy of the Gita in the Russian language to Putin on December 4 had 29,000 reposts and 2,31,000 likes. PM Modi's congratulatory message to Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on his marriage to Jodie Haydon on November 29 had 14,900 reposts and 2,11,000 likes, while Modi's welcome of Putin to his 7, Lok Kalyan Marg residence on December 4 had 20,000 reposts and 1,79,000 likes. Modi's post on the Russian President receiving guard of honour at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on December 5 had 28,100 retweets and 2,18,000 likes, and his post on witnessing the Dharma Dhvajarohan Utsav at Shri Ram Janambhoomi Mandir in Ayodhya on November 25 had 26,300 reposts and 1,40,000 likes.

**ZUBEEN'S DEATH: SIT FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST MLA AKHIL GOGOI FOR 'CIRCULATING' CHARGESHEET DETAILS**

**Diary Times Desk :** The special investigation team (SIT), probing into the death of singer Zubeen Garg, filed a complaint with the Assam Police's Crime Branch against Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi for allegedly circulating on social media "unverified" documents related to the chargesheet in the case, a senior official said on Friday. The circulation of such documents is "illegal" and will "mislead the public and create confusion", he said. Gogoi, the Sivasagar MLA, was accused of circulating some documents on social media, claiming these to be part of the chargesheet against the seven accused in the singer's death case.

The nine-member SIT, headed by Special DGP Munna Prasad Gupta, had submitted the chargesheet before the Kamrup (Metro) Chief Judicial Magistrate on December 12. The court is yet to release certified copies of the chargesheet to those who have applied for it, a lawyer pointed out, adding that it has only been shared with the accused and their family members. "SIT's Investigating Officer Rosie Kalita has filed the complaint against Gogoi for registration of an FIR with the Crime Branch of the police. The complaint is being examined, and a decision on the matter will be taken accordingly," the official said. Gogoi, in a social media post, said, "I have come to know that the government has filed a case against me for making the charge sheet public. I am severely ill, but I will go to Guwahati to face the case." The SIT chief had said that the singer's secretary Siddhartha Sharma, festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, and band members Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amritprava Mahanta have been charged.

**CBI BOOKS 8 IN RS 1.14-CRORE PATIENT WELFARE GRANT SCAM AT PGI CHANDIGARH**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday registered an FIR against eight people, including six PGIMER Chandigarh employees — one retired in 2020 — and a campus photocopy shop owner in a Rs 1.14-crore patient welfare grant scam.

The case also names other unknown public servants, private persons, firms and companies that may have been involved. The FIR, a copy of which is with The Tribune, lodged by the CBI Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB), Chandigarh, pertains to alleged large-scale misappropriation of funds meant for poor and needy patients between 2020 and 2024. The case has been registered under Sections 120-B read with 406, 409, 420 and 471 of the IPC and Section 13(1)(a) read with 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018). The FIR stems from a preliminary enquiry initiated on the basis of a complaint by the PGIMER Vigilance Branch. Investigation has been entrusted to Inspector Ankush Sharma. The accused named include Dharam Chand, Junior Administrative Assistant (superannuated on December 31, 2020); Sunil Kumar, MRC (contractual); Pradeep Singh, LDC (contractual); Chetan Gupta, LDC (contractual); Neha, Hospital Attendant (contractual).

**DOCTOR WHOSE 'NAQAB' WAS REMOVED BY CM NITISH KUMAR WILL JOIN DUTY IN BIHAR: OFFICIAL**

**Diary Times Desk :** Amid rumours that the doctor has declined a government job in Bihar after her 'naqab' (veil) was removed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar during a programme here, an official concerned on Friday claimed that she will join duty.

Dr Mahfoozur Rahman, principal of Government Tibbi College and Hospital here, said that AYUSH doctor Nurat Parveen's family has confirmed that she will join duty on Saturday.

"I spoke to Parveen's husband, relatives and her classmates. They told me that she would join duty on December 20. She has to first join the Government Tibbi College and Hospital, and later she will be shifted to her place of posting. Her family members and classmates have assured me that she would join duty," Rahman said.

The incident, a video clip of which has been circulated widely and sparked a major political row, took place on Monday at the Chief Minister's secretariat in Patna when AYUSH doctors had gathered to receive their letters of appointment. When the woman came up for her letter, Kumar saw her 'naqab', said "what is this" and then removed the veil.

Following this, there were rumours that Parveen declined the job.

## SUPREME COURT

**SC TO HOLD SITTINGS ON DECEMBER 22 TO HEAR URGENT MATTERS: CJI SURYA KANT**

**Diary Times Desk :** Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Friday said that he was willing to sit on December 22, the first day of Christmas and New Year holidays of the Supreme Court, to take up urgent matters for hearing.

"We will sit on Monday. We are not going to burden other Supreme Court judges, who have to study case files late at night to hear new cases. I will not bother any other Bench," a Bench led by CJI Kant said.

The Registry will verify urgency and list matters for hearing on Monday, the CJI said.

CJI Kant, however, said, "We are not sure whether one or two Benches will sit... it will all depend on the number of cases. We will pass appropriate orders (for constitution of Bench(es))."

The CJI asked junior lawyers mentioning cases for urgent listing to argue their cases on Monday, December 22. "All those who are in the queue seeking listing, will you argue on Monday? We are ready to sit on Monday," the CJI said.

"We will hear this case on Monday only if you argue your matter," CJI told a junior lawyer. The Supreme Court is scheduled to be closed for Christmas and New Year holidays from December 22 and will reopen on January 5, 2026.

**ACCUSED IN GOA NIGHTCLUB FIRE CASE HAS FLED TO UK, SHIELDED BY 'BIG GUYS', CLAIMS ORIGINAL LAND OWNER**

**Diary Times Desk :** Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar, original owner of the land on which the fire-ravaged nightclub in North Goa stood, alleged on Friday that "some big guys" were protecting Surinder Kumar Khosla, one of the accused in the case.

In an interview with PTI, Amonkar claimed that police allowed Khosla, a British national, to flee to the UK after the devastating fire at 'Birch by Romeo Lane' club at Arpora village claimed 25 lives on December 6. Amonkar has been fighting a legal battle against Khosla to get the land back from him. Goa police, who has arrested eight persons including club owners Saurabh Luthra, Gaurav Luthra and Ajay Gupta, have named Khosla as an accused in the same First Information Report over the blaze. Police were still looking for Khosla, according to a senior official. "The demolition order by the village panchayat against the club was in Khosla's name. All the complaints filed against the club named Khosla. He is the prime accused," Amonkar claimed.



To place an advertisement  
CALL +91 8627064966  
Monday - Saturday (9am - 6pm)

## ED ATTACHES ASSETS OF YUVRAJ SINGH, ROBIN UTHAPPA, SONU SOOD AMONG OTHERS IN BETTING-LINKED PMLA CASE



**Diary Times Desk :** Assets of former Indian cricketers Yuvraj Singh and Robin Uthappa apart from that of ex TMC MP Mimi Chakraborty and actor Sonu Sood have been attached by the ED in an "illegal" betting app-linked money-laundering case estimated to be worth more than Rs 1,000 crore, official sources said on Friday.

The properties of actor Neha Sharma, mother of model Urvashi Rautela and Bengali actor Ankush Hazra have also been attached after the federal probe agency issued a provisional order the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), according to sources. These include assets worth about Rs 1 crore of Sood, Rs 59 lakh of Chakraborty, Rs 2.5 crore of Yuvraj Singh, Rs 1.26 crore of Sharma, Rs 8.26 lakh of Uthappa, Rs 47 lakh of Hazra and Rs 2.02 crore of Rautela's mother, sources said. All these celebrities were questioned by the ED in the past and these assets have been categorised as the "proceeds of crime" (illicit money under the PMLA) of the alleged illegal betting app named 1xbet registered in Curacao.

## DOCTOR WHOSE 'NAQAB' WAS REMOVED BY CM NITISH KUMAR WILL JOIN DUTY IN BIHAR: OFFICIAL

**Diary Times Desk :** Amid rumours that the doctor has declined a government job in Bihar after her 'naqab' (veil) was removed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar during a programme here, an official concerned on Friday claimed that she will join duty. Dr Mahfoozur Rahman, principal of Government Tibbi College and Hospital here, said that AYUSH doctor Nusrat Parveen's family has confirmed that she will join duty on Saturday. "I spoke to Parveen's husband, relatives and her classmates. They told me that she would join duty on December 20. She has to first join the Government Tibbi College and Hospital, and later she will be shifted to her place of posting. Her family members and classmates have assured me that she would join duty," Rahman said. The incident, a video clip of which has been circulated widely and sparked a major political row, took place on Monday at the Chief Minister's secretariat in Patna when AYUSH doctors had gathered to receive their letters of appointment.

## SC ISSUES NOTICE TO PUNJAB GOVT ON SAD LEADER BIKRAM SINGH MAJITHIA'S PLEA FOR BAIL

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Punjab Vigilance Bureau on Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia's petition challenging the Punjab and Haryana High Court's order denying him bail in a disproportionate assets case. A Bench led by Justice Vikram Nath, however, refused to consider his prayer for interim bail. Asking the Punjab Vigilance Bureau to respond to Majithia's petition challenging the December 4 order of the high court, it posted the matter for hearing on January 19. The high court had dismissed his bail plea, saying the possibility of him influencing the investigation could not be ruled out. Directing the Bureau to complete its probe in three months, the high court had said Majithia could seek bail after that. The Punjab Vigilance Bureau arrested Majithia on June 25 in the disproportionate assets (DA) case that allegedly involved accumulation of Rs 540 crore of wealth. The DA case FIR against Majithia stemmed from an ongoing probe into a 2021 drug case by a Punjab Police SIT. The FIR was registered on the basis of a June 2025 report of the SIT. Majithia is lodged in the New Nabha Jail, Patiala. A Mohali court had rejected his bail plea in August. The Vigilance Bureau filed an over 40,000-page chargesheet in the disproportionate assets case in the Mohali court on August 22.

## PM MODI'S EIGHT POSTS ON X MOST RETWEETED, LIKED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's eight comments or pictures have become the most liked posts among the top 10 on X in the last 30 days, including his photo with Russian President Vladimir Putin when both leaders travelled together in a car from Delhi's IGI airport, officials said. The eight posts on X together had 1,60,700 reposts and 14.76 lakh likes, thus becoming the only politician featured among the top 10 most liked and reposted handles on the social media platform. "X has a new feature. It shows the most-liked tweets in the last month in a country. For India, in the last 30 days, the top eight out of 10 most liked tweets are of PM Modi. No other politician features in the top 10," an official said. The photo of PM Modi travelling together in a car with Putin after his arrival from Moscow on December 4 had over 34,000 reposts and 2,14,000 likes — the highest among the eight posts of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister presenting a copy of the Gita in the Russian language to Putin on December 4 had 29,000 reposts and 2,31,000 likes.



## ACTOR ASSAULT CASE: SURVIVOR POSTS EMOTIONAL MESSAGE AMID CYBER ATTACKS

**Diary Times Desk :** The survivor of the 2017 actor sexual assault case posted an emotional message on social media on Friday, speaking out against the cyber attacks targeting her. The message comes over a week after a court here acquitted Malayalam actor Dileep, an accused in the case, citing lack of evidence. In an Instagram post, she wrote: "Not a victim, not a survivor, just a simple human being. Let me live." Beginning the post by saying "Mistake done by me," the actor explained what she meant by the statement. She said her so-called mistake was that after she was assaulted, she immediately lodged a complaint with the police and pursued legal remedies. "Taking it as fate, I should have remained silent, pretending nothing had happened. Later, if the video had surfaced, I should have committed suicide when people questioned why I did not file a complaint with the police," the post read.

## GHAZIABAD SHOCKER: LANDLADY SMASHED ON HEAD WITH PRESSURE COOKER LID AFTER RENTAL DISPUTE

**Diary Times Desk :** Two days after a couple allegedly killed their landlady and stuffed the body in a red suitcase in Ghaziabad, chilling details of the murder and the motive behind it emerged on Friday. According to police, the accused, Akriti Gupta (33), strangled the woman with a scarf after a heated argument over unpaid rent, while her husband, Ajay Gupta (35), struck on her head with a pressure cooker lid. The incident occurred around 8 pm on Wednesday when Deepshikha Sharma (48) had gone to the couple's house in Aura Chimera Society in Rajnagar Extension, to collect five months of pending rent. A heated argument ensued, during which she allegedly bit Ajay Gupta in self-defence. In retaliation, Akriti strangled her with a scarf and Ajay struck her on the head with a pressure cooker lid, resulting in her death on the spot, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Nandgram Upasna Pandey said. The couple then stuffed her body in a red suitcase and concealed it in the storage box of a double bed, the ACP said. When Deepshikha did not return home till late night, her domestic help, Minni, went to the tenants' flat to check on her. Growing suspicious, she searched the flat and discovered the suitcase containing the body. She then alerted police at around 11.15 pm, following which a police team reached the spot and arrested the couple. The body was sent for a post-mortem. On Thursday, Ajay Gupta and Akriti Gupta were produced before the court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate.



INDIAN RESEARCHERS DISCOVER NEW ELEMENT TO TACKLE ALZHEIMER'S, CANCER

**Diary Times Desk :** Indian researchers have discovered a new element in autophagy, the body's natural self-cleansing process through the removal of dead or damaged cells, which could help develop therapeutic strategies for diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and cancer. Identification of key players in the early steps of autophagosome biogenesis, a key process in which the cells create a double-membrane sack that captures and isolates cellular debris, pathogens or damaged organelles for recycling, can lay the foundations for modulating the pathway for finding interventions in such diseases. When a cell fails to clear waste, its health suffers, especially in long-lived neurons. The autophagy pathway, which removes damaged material and defends against infections, is disrupted in diseases like Alzheimer's and Huntington's. Autophagy also has dual roles in cancer, by preventing it early on but supporting tumour growth later. Autophagy acts as tumour suppressor by maintaining genome integrity and cellular homeostasis by clearing cellular junk, but it is also a double-edged sword as certain types of cancer cells hijack autophagy for their own survival and propagation.

PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED SINE DIE, DELHI POLLUTION DEBATE LEFT HANGING

**Diary Times Desk :** Parliament was adjourned sine die on Friday, bringing the Winter Session to an abrupt end and shelving the much-anticipated discussion on Delhi's worsening air quality. Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were adjourned indefinitely, preventing MPs from raising urgent concerns about the public health crisis caused by severe pollution in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). The discussion on air pollution had been scheduled for the final day of the Winter Session in the Lok Sabha. MPs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, and Bansuri Swaraj were expected to highlight the dangerous spike in pollutants, including particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), and their impact on respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases and overall public health. Delhi has repeatedly recorded "very poor" air quality levels over the past few weeks, with smog affecting visibility, transport, and daily life, particularly for children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions. Environmental activists and experts have repeatedly urged the government to implement stricter pollution control measures, enforce vehicular emission.

ACCUSED IN GOA NIGHTCLUB FIRE CASE HAS FLED TO UK, SHIELDED BY 'BIG GUYS', CLAIMS ORIGINAL LAND OWNER



**Diary Times Desk :** Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar, original owner of the land on which the fire-ravaged nightclub in North Goa stood, alleged on Friday that "some big guys" were protecting Surinder Kumar Khosla, one of the accused in the case. In an interview with PTI, Amonkar claimed that police allowed Khosla, a British national, to flee to the UK after the devastating fire at 'Birch by Romeo Lane' club at Arpora village claimed 25 lives on December 6. Amonkar has been fighting a legal battle against Khosla to get the land back from him. Goa police, who has arrested eight persons including club owners Saurabh Luthra, Gaurav Luthra and Ajay Gupta, have named Khosla as an accused in the same First Information Report over the blaze. Police were still looking for Khosla, according to a senior official. "The demolition order by the village panchayat against the club was in Khosla's name. All the complaints filed against the club named Khosla. He is the prime accused," Amonkar claimed.

4 KILLED, 1 INJURED AFTER TRUCK OVERTURNS ON CAR IN BUNDI; DRIVER FLEES

**Diary Times Desk :** Efforts are on to trace the driver of a bajri-laden truck, which overturned on a car on National Highway 52 in Bundi on Thursday, killing four persons, police said on Friday. The accident occurred at around 6.30 pm on Thursday when five members of a family were travelling to Kota to attend a birthday celebration, Additional Superintendent of Police Bundi Uma Sharma said. According to Sharma, the truck hit the car from behind after one of its tyres reportedly burst. Both vehicles skidded to the other side of the highway and collided with a crane coming from the opposite side, she said. The truck then overturned over the car burying it under the bajri, Sharma said. Both the truck and crane drivers managed to flee the scene unhurt, while the three vehicles involved in the accident were seized, she added. The deceased have been identified as Moinuddin (60), Fariuddin (45), and Azamiuddin (40), and their cousin Saifuddin (28).

ZUBEEN'S DEATH: SIT FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST MLA AKHIL GOGOI FOR 'CIRCULATING' CHARGESHEET DETAILS

**Diary Times Desk :** The special investigation team (SIT), probing into the death of singer Zubeen Garg, filed a complaint with the Assam Police's Crime Branch against Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi for allegedly circulating on social media "unverified" documents related to the chargesheet in the case, a senior official said on Friday. The circulation of such documents is "illegal" and will "mislead the public and create confusion", he said. Gogoi, the Sivasagar MLA, was accused of circulating some documents on social media, claiming these to be part of the chargesheet against the seven accused in the singer's death case. The nine-member SIT, headed by Special DGP Munna Prasad Gupta, had submitted the chargesheet before the Kamrup (Metro) Chief Judicial Magistrate on December 12. The court is yet to release certified copies of the chargesheet to those who have applied for it, a lawyer pointed out, adding that it has only been shared with the accused and their family members.

INDIA'S TRADE DEFICIT WITH CHINA MAY REACH USD 106 BILLION IN 2025: GTRI

**Diary Times Desk :** India's trade deficit with China is expected to widen to USD 106 billion in 2025 as imports continue to rise much faster than exports to the neighbouring country, according to a report released on Friday by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI). India's exports to China fell from USD 23 billion in 2021 to USD 15.2 billion in 2022, remained subdued at USD 14.5 billion in 2023, and edged up slightly to USD 15.1 billion in 2024. In 2025, exports are projected to improve to USD 17.5 billion, still well below earlier levels, the think tank said. In contrast, imports from China have grown sharply, rising from USD 87.7 billion in 2021 to USD 102.6 billion in 2022, before moderating to USD 91.8 billion in 2023 and then jumping to USD 109.6 billion in 2024. Imports are estimated to reach USD 123.5 billion in 2025. "This has pushed India's trade deficit with China from USD 64.7 billion in 2021 to USD 94.5 billion in 2024, and an expected USD 106 billion in 2025," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said. On December 16, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada told the Lok Sabha in a written reply that the widening deficit is mainly due to imports of raw materials, intermediate goods and capital goods such as auto components, electronic parts and assemblies.



## JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SET TO RELEASE EPSTEIN FILES AFTER YEARS OF SECRECY



**Diary Times Desk :** The US Justice Department faces a Friday deadline to release its files on Jeffrey Epstein, the convicted sex offender and wealthy financier whose ties to some of the world's most influential figures, including Donald Trump have long drawn scrutiny. As president, Trump had sought to keep the records sealed.

The documents could offer the most detailed account yet of nearly two decades of government investigations into Epstein's sexual abuse of young women and underage girls. Their release has been repeatedly demanded by a public eager to know whether Epstein's powerful associates knew about, or participated in, the abuse. Epstein's accusers have also sought answers about why federal authorities shut down an initial investigation in 2008.

Under mounting political pressure from fellow Republicans, Trump signed a bill on November 19 giving the Justice Department 30 days to release most of its files and communications related to Epstein, including material connected to the investigation into Epstein's death in a federal jail. The department has not said when during the day the records will be made public.

The law's passage marked a rare display of bipartisanship, overcoming months of opposition from Trump and Republican leadership.

## TRUMP SIGNS INTO LAW DEFENCE POLICY BILL BACKING DEEPER ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIA INCLUDING VIA QUAD

**Diary Times Desk :** US President Donald Trump has signed into law an annual defence policy bill that highlights broadening America's engagement with India, including through the Quad to advance the shared objective of a free and open Indo-Pacific region and address the challenge posed by China. The National Defence Authorisation Act for Fiscal Year 2026, signed into law Thursday, authorises fiscal year appropriations for the Department of War (DoW), the Department of Energy national security programmes, the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, the Intelligence Community, and other executive departments and agencies. "The Act will enable the DoW to carry out my Peace Through Strength agenda, protect the homeland from domestic and foreign threats, and strengthen the defence industrial base, while eliminating funding for wasteful and radical programmes that undermine the warfighting ethos of our nation's men and women in uniform," Trump said in a statement. The Act outlines 'sense of Congress on Defence Alliances and Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region'. Under this, the Secretary of Defence should continue efforts that strengthen US defence alliances and partnerships.



## BANGLADESH ON EDGE AFTER STUDENT LEADER'S DEATH; GOVT CONDEMNS LYNCHING OF HINDU MAN



**Diary Times Desk :** Police and paramilitary troops fanned out across Dhaka and other cities in Bangladesh on Friday after violent protests overnight over the death of a popular youth leader, with concerns of further unrest ahead of national elections in which he was due to run. Streets were calm in the morning, but residents in the Muslim-majority nation said they were worried there could be fresh violence after Friday prayers later in the day. Sharif Osman Hadi, 32, was a spokesperson for the Inquilab Mancha, or Platform for Revolution, and participated in the student-led protests that overthrew the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year. He was shot in the head by masked assailants in Dhaka last Friday while launching his campaign for the elections. Hadi was initially treated at a local hospital before being flown to Singapore for advanced medical care, where he died after spending six days on life support.

## BANGLADESHI INTERIM GOVT URGES PEOPLE TO RESIST ALL FORMS OF MOB VIOLENCE

**Diary Times Desk :** The interim government on Friday urged Bangladeshi citizens to resist all forms of mob violence committed by "a few fringe elements" following the death of a prominent July Uprising leader six days after he was shot by masked gunmen in the national capital. In a statement, the interim government, led by Muhammad Yunus, also condemned the lynching of a Hindu man, saying there is no space for such violence in the new Bangladesh. "The perpetrators of this heinous crime will not be spared," it added. The Hindu man, identified as Dipu Chandra Das, was lynched to death and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy on Thursday in Mymensingh city, the Bangla Tribune news portal reported. "We strongly and unequivocally condemn all acts of violence, intimidation, arson and destruction of properties," said the statement issued by the Chief Adviser's Press Wing. "At this critical hour, we call upon every citizen to honour Hadi by rejecting and resisting violence, incitement and hatred," the statement said. While no incidents of violence were reported.

## PUTIN TO FACE ONLINE YEAR-END Q&A SESSION

**Diary Times Desk :** Beijing was shrouded in heavy smog on Thursday with AQI climbRussian President Vladimir Putin will on Friday hold his annual year-end online session where he will answer questions from the public and media. The online question and answer session, which will be held at noon (2:30 pm IST), is into the 22<sup>nd</sup> year and is likely to sum up the results of 2025. Putin will also take questions from foreign media, not considered 'friendly' by Moscow, Kremlin said. Over two weeks preceding Friday's online conference, the call centres set up specially by the Kremlin have received more than 2.49 million questions for the president. According to the Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, most of the questions concern social issues and subsidies. All the questions have been grouped thematically and the president has been going through them late into night for a couple of days, he said. During last year's conference, he answered questions for over four hours.

## RUSSIA, UKRAINE CARRY OUT NEW EXCHANGE OF BODIES



**Diary Times Desk :** Ukraine and Russia have carried out a new exchange of bodies of dead soldiers, Ukrainian and Russian officials said on Friday. Kremlin aide Vladimir Medinsky said Russia had handed over to Ukraine the remains of 1,000 Ukrainian servicemen and had received the bodies of 26 Russian soldiers from Kyiv. Ukrainian officials confirmed that Kyiv had received 1,003 bodies of killed servicemen from Russia. They said that investigators and experts would work to conduct all necessary examinations and identify them. Ukraine's prisoner-of-war coordination centre posted on the Telegram app pictures of several large trucks and people in protective overalls checking bodies in white sacks. Since the start of Russia's invasion in February 2022, Kyiv and Moscow have conducted regular exchanges of the bodies of the killed servicemen. Authorities in both countries have been generally tight-lipped about the overall numbers of soldiers killed and wounded.



AUSTRALIAN TEEN WOUNDED WHILE SHIELDING CHILDREN DURING BONDI  
ATTACK SAYS SHE IS NOT A HERO

**Diary Times Desk :** As two gunmen opened fire on hundreds celebrating Hanukkah on Sydney's Bondi Beach, 14-year-old Chaya Dadon's mind was clear. Across from where she had taken cover under a bench, Dadon saw two children stranded in the open beside their wounded parents. "I knew in that moment, I felt like Hashem was sitting right next to me," she said in an interview with Reuters, using a Hebrew name for God. "He was whispering in my ear, 'This is your mission: go save those kids.'" The schoolgirl left the safety of her hiding spot, pulled the children to safety and jumped on top of them, covering their bodies with her own. At some point, she was shot in the thigh. But she kept shielding them, reciting the Shema, a Jewish prayer. "I knew I got shot, but I wasn't even worried. I channelled all the energy I had into strength, and I made sure I stayed there for those kids," she said. "If I could give up my life to save these children, that's what I was going to do." Her father eventually found them and took her to get medical help. "When he found me, he told me later that I had the girl in one arm and the boy in the other, and I was just kissing them," she said. Sunday's attack, which officials described as an act of terrorism, killed 15 people and wounded dozens more in Australia's worst mass shooting in nearly three decades. Police allege the Islamic State-inspired attack was carried out by Sajid Akram, 50, and his 24-year-old son, Naveed. Sajid was shot dead by police at the scene, while Naveed has been charged with 59 offences, including murder and terrorism.



BILL GATES SEEN IN NEW PICTURES FROM  
EPSTEIN'S ESTATE

**Diary Times Desk :** American politicians and the public are awaiting the release of the long-anticipated "Epstein Files," expected to be made public by midnight on Friday. The anticipation comes as House Oversight Committee Democrats released a new batch of images recovered from Jeffrey Epstein's estate. On Thursday, House Democrats released approximately 70 photographs obtained from Epstein's computer and email accounts. The images include photos of Epstein with several prominent figures, though many faces have been redacted. One image shows former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates standing next to an unidentified woman, while another depicts linguist Noam Chomsky seated beside Epstein on an aircraft. Other photos appear to show social gatherings involving Epstein.

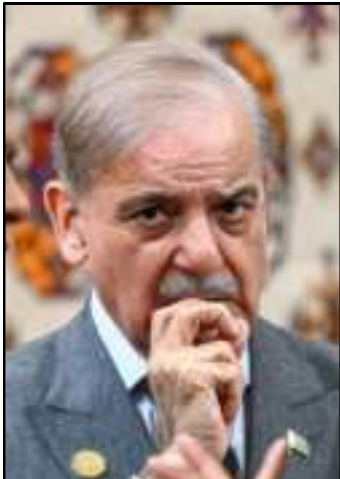
LIGHTNING STRIKE ON BURJ KHALIFA?  
DUBAI CROWN PRINCE SHARES  
'THUNDERSTRUCK' MOMENT

**Diary Times Desk :** Dubai's Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum—better known online as Fazza—posted a video that turned the BurjKhalifa into a lightning-strike stage. The prince simply captioned it "Dubai" and added a cloud-rain and high-voltage emoji.

The footage went viral in minutes. Social feeds lit up with comments ranging from "WOW, nature just signed an exclusive with the Burj!" to "That's one way to power a skyscraper." The timing was no coincidence: the UAE was in the thick of the AlBashayer low-pressure system, the National Centre of Meteorology (NCM) having warned of heavy rain, thunder, lightning and possible hail across several emirates.

PAKISTANIS TO SWEAT MORE AS IMF TURNS DOWN SHEHBAZ SHARIF'S  
REQUEST TO SLASH TAXES ON CONDOMS

**Diary Times Desk :** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has rejected Pakistan's request to immediately withdraw the 18 per cent General Sales Tax (GST) on condoms and other contraceptives, dealing a setback to the government's efforts to make birth-control products more affordable amid rapid population growth. According to reports, the IMF informed Islamabad that any exemption or reduction in taxes on contraceptives can only be considered during the next federal budget cycle. The lender cited Pakistan's struggle to meet revised revenue targets under its ongoing bailout programme and warned that tax relief could weaken enforcement and increase the risk of smuggling. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government had sought relief from the GST, arguing that the tax—introduced through successive mini-budgets to satisfy IMF revenue conditions—has effectively turned essential reproductive health products into luxury items, placing them beyond the reach of low-income households. Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) raised the issue with IMF officials in Washington through email correspondence and a virtual meeting. The proposed exemption was estimated to result in a revenue loss of PKR 400–600 million.



COLDPLAY SCANDAL: 'EVEN IF I  
DID HAVE AN AFFAIR...'  
KRISTIN CABOT BREAKS  
SILENCE ON VIRAL 'KISS CAM'  
VIDEO

**Diary Times Desk :** When the lights went down at the Coldplay concert in July, Kristin Cabot, 53-year-old HR veteran and mother of two from New Hampshire, thought she'd just dance, have a few "High Noons" and let the night swallow her. Instead, the stadium's jumbotron swallowed her — and her boss, CEO Andy Byron — in a close-embrace that went viral, sparked death threats, divorce papers, resignations and a meme that branded her the "most maligned HR manager in history." In a series of candid interviews with The New York Times and The Times of London, Cabot finally breaks her silence. "I made a bad decision and had a couple of High Noons and danced and acted inappropriately with my boss," she admits. "I gave up my career for that. That's the price I chose to pay." "But even if I did have an affair, it's not anybody's business." She describes a "big happy crush" on Byron, who was also separated at the time. Their first — and only — kiss happened in the pitch-black back rows of a 60,000-person arena.

THE HANDSHAKE THAT WENT  
VIRAL: WATCH GIORGIAMELONI  
'LOOK UP' TO DANIEL CHAPO



**Diary Times Desk :** Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni recently hosted Mozambican President Daniel Chapo at Palazzo Chigi for talks on trade, energy and climate resilience. What should have been a normal diplomatic handshake soon turned into an Internet meme after the cameras caught something else entirely: a 2-foot height gap that left Meloni 'looking up' — and a little sheepish. Chapo, 48, is said to tower at 6ft8in, while Meloni clocks in at 5ft2in. As the two approached the photo-op, the camera's captured Meloni's reaction. There were also some photographers who even lay on the floor — just to fit both leaders into a single frame. The clip spread like wildfire on X, Instagram and TikTok. Users coined hashtags like #HeightDiplomacy and #TowerOfRome, and memes ranged from "When the UN finally gets a 'standing ovation'" to "Meloni's new stretch-goal: reaching the podium". Many noted Chapo's reputation as a basketball fan and joked that he brought his "court-sized presence" to Italy.

UNREST AFTER HADI'S DEATH: BORDER GUARD BANGLADESH DEPLOYED  
ACROSS DHAKA TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER

**Diary Times Desk :** Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel have been deployed at multiple strategic locations across Dhaka to maintain law and order ahead of the arrival of the body of slain political activist Sharif Osman Hadi from Singapore, according to bdnews24. In a statement issued on Friday, the BGB said troops have been positioned in the airport area, Karwan Bazar, the Hotel InterContinental zone and other key points in the capital, as security concerns remain high following protests and incidents of violence triggered by the youth leader Hadi's killing. The deployment comes as Dhaka continues to witness unrest following the death of Hadi, the convenor and spokesperson of 'Inqilab Moncho', who was shot at close range on December 12 while travelling in a rickshaw in Dhaka's Bijoy Nagar area. Critically injured, he was first taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later shifted to Evercare Hospital for intensive care. On December 15, Hadi was flown to Singapore by air ambulance for advanced medical treatment, where he later died.



US EMBASSY ISSUES SECURITY  
ADVISORY FOR CITIZENS AMID  
SHARIF OSMAN HADI'S FUNERAL  
IN DHAKA

**Diary Times Desk :** The US Embassy in Dhaka on Friday issued a security advisory for American citizens, citing media reports related to the arrival and funeral of youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi and warning of potential traffic disruption and unrest in the capital. In a statement posted on X, the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka said, "Media reports that the body of youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi will land in Dhaka at 6:05 pm today, Friday, December 19." Providing details of the funeral arrangements, the embassy said, "His funeral prayer is expected to be held on Manik Mia Avenue (in front of the National Parliament Building) after Duha prayer (around 1400 hours) on Saturday, December 20." Linking the events to expected disruption in the city, the advisory noted, "Extremely heavy traffic is expected in the area and throughout Dhaka." Cautioning US nationals about safety risks amid the gathering of large crowds, the embassy said, "U.S. citizens should practice vigilance and remember that gatherings intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence."

"DARKEST NIGHT; ATTACK ON  
FREEDOM OF SPEECH, NEWS  
MEDIA": EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
OF VANDALISED MEDIA  
HOUSE PROTHOM ALO IN  
BANGLADESH

**Diary Times Desk :** Calling it the "darkest night" for journalism in the country, Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif on Friday said the vandalism of the newspaper's office in Dhaka's Karwanbazar was a direct assault on freedom of speech and the news media in Bangladesh, forcing the newspaper to halt print publication for the first time in its 27-year history since its establishment in 1998.

The attack on the news outlets came after the death of Inqilab Mancha spokesperson Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, one of the prominent figures of last year's July Uprising, when a group of people gathered in front of the offices of the newspapers and attacked them, as per Nagorik. The "miscreants" described by the Sharif also attacked another media outlet, the Daily Star, in the same area. Speaking to ANI following the vandalism, the Executive Editor said that Hadi's killing had sparked anger across society, which was allegedly diverted by miscreants towards media organisations.

BANGLADESH'S POLITICAL SHIFT RAISES ALARM  
OVER MINORITY SAFETY, REGIONAL STABILITY

**Diary Times Desk :** A recent statement by Hasnat Abdullah, a leader and Southern Chief Organiser of Bangladesh's newly formed National Citizen Party (NCP), warning that India's northeastern "Seven Sisters" could be isolated if Bangladesh were "destabilised", has triggered concern among regional observers, according to the report by the Times of Israel. Analysts say the remarks reflect a deeper shift in Bangladesh's political and social landscape following last year's political transition. Since the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024 and the subsequent assumption of authority by Muhammad Yunus, Bangladesh has witnessed increasingly hardline rhetoric, a resurgence of Islamist networks, and a marked rise in violence against religious minorities. Political transitions often create power vacuums, and analysts note that Bangladesh's post-2024 environment has seen such a vacuum filled by forces drawing on grievance-driven.

PAKISTAN FLOOD-HIT FARMERS MOVE  
CLIMATE JUSTICE CASE IN GERMANY  
AGAINST TOP POLLUTERS

**Diary Times Desk :** Farmers affected by Pakistan's catastrophic 2022 floods announced plans to move a climate justice claim in Germany against two leading global carbon emitters, asserting that the scale of devastation highlighted Pakistan's severe exposure to climate change impacts, though it contributes just one per cent to global greenhouse gas emissions, according to Dawn. The decision was announced at a press conference at the Karachi Press Club by farmer claimants Hamza Khan Kalhor, Abdul Hafeez Khoso and Abdul Khaliq Leghari, representing flood-ravaged areas of Larkana, Jacobabad and Dadu. The organisers said the farmers are set to initiate climate accountability proceedings in Germany against two companies listed among the world's largest carbon dioxide emitters. Details shared at the briefing indicated that the legal action would be filed under German civil law.

RAHUL GANDHI MEETS GERMAN ENVIRONMENT MINISTER IN BERLIN,  
DISCUSSES CLIMATE CHALLENGES ACROSS WORLD



**Diary Times Desk :** Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Friday met with German Environment Minister Carsten Schneider in Berlin to discuss the shared challenge of climate change and the importance of sustainable, people-centric solutions for the future.

The Indian National Congress shared a post on their official 'X' handle and informed about the development. "LoP Rahul Gandhi had an insightful conversation with Carsten Schneider, Germany's Federal Minister for Environment and Climate Protection. They discussed the shared challenge of climate change and how sustainable, people-centric solutions are crucial for the future," the 'X' post said. Earlier, Gandhi also addressed the Indian community at the Connecting Cultures event organised by the Indian Overseas Congress. "We defend the truth of India." LoP Rahul Gandhi addressed the Indian community at the Connecting Cultures event organised by the Indian Overseas Congress, reaffirming our shared commitment to truth and democratic values," an 'X' post from INC read. Earlier in the day, Rahul Gandhi had lunch with former German Chancellor Olaf Scholz during his 5-day visit to Germany. On Tuesday, LoP Gandhi visited the BMW World museum in Munich, Germany, where he marvelled at the feats of Indian engineering being displayed with the TVS 450 cc motorcycle, developed in partnership with the German automobile manufacturer. During the visit, he interacted with visitors while checking the display of various cars made by BMW.



INDIA SEEKS NETHERLANDS SUPPORT AS EU FREE TRADE TALKS ENTER  
DECISIVE PHASE: JAISHANKAR



**Diary Times Desk :** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday said India is entering what he described as a "decisive phase" in negotiations with the European Union on a free trade agreement, and stressed the importance of support from key EU members, including the Netherlands. "We also count on your support as we are moving to what I hope is a decisive phase in our negotiations with the European Union on the free trade agreement," Jaishankar said during his meeting with the Netherlands Foreign Minister David van Weel. Jaishankar said India places a high value on its ties with the Netherlands, both bilaterally and in its role within the European Union. "We value our relations with the Netherlands enormously, bilaterally as well as a key player of the European Union," he said. He noted that cooperation between the two countries has expanded in recent months, with several agreements adding new dimensions to the relationship. "A number of important agreements have been reached in the last few months, which have added more dimensions to our cooperation," Jaishankar said, adding that there was further potential to deepen engagement.

TRUSTEES' BOARD RENAMES JOHN F  
KENNEDY CENTER TO TRUMP-KENNEDY  
CENTER

**Diary Times Desk :** White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on Thursday said that the Kennedy Center has now been named to the Trump-Kennedy Center. Leavitt said the renaming was to honour the work of US President Donald Trump in its financial reconstruction and in rebuilding its reputation. In a post on X, Leavitt said, "I have just been informed that the highly respected Board of the Kennedy Center, some of the most successful people from all parts of the world, have just voted unanimously to rename the Kennedy Center to the Trump-Kennedy Center, because of the unbelievable work President Trump has done over the last year in saving the building. Not only from the standpoint of its reconstruction, but also financially, and its reputation." "Congratulations to President Donald J. Trump, and likewise, congratulations to President Kennedy, because this will be a truly great team long into the future ! The building will no doubt attain new levels of success.

UKRAINE'S "RESILIENCE" CAN WEAKEN  
PUTIN'S ABILITY TO PROLONG WAR:  
ZELENSKYY

**Diary Times Desk :** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday underscored the importance of resilience in weakening Russia's ability to prolong the ongoing war, directly linking sustained pressure on Moscow to the prospects for peace in Europe. Highlighting endurance as a strategic factor, Zelenskyy said in a post on X, "If we know - and if Putin knows - that we can stay resilient, then his reason to drag-out this war becomes much weaker," framing resilience as a tool that alters the aggressor's calculations and affects the overall trajectory of the conflict. Building on this, the Ukrainian President described resilience as a form of pressure intended to change Russia's approach to the war. "This is how pressure on the aggressor should work - pressure that brings peace," he said, situating Ukraine's resolve within a broader strategy to deter further escalation.

BANGLADESH INTERIM GOVT CONDEMNS VIOLENCE, URGES PEOPLE TO  
HONOUR HADI BY SHUNNING HATRED

**Diary Times Desk :** The Bangladesh interim government led by Muhammad Yunus on Friday issued its first response to the ongoing unrest in the country, urging people to resist acts of mob violence.

It said it "strongly and unequivocally" condemns all forms of violence, intimidation, arson and destruction of property, warning that such actions threaten to derail the country's democratic process.

The government urges all citizens of Bangladesh to resist all forms of mob violence which it said was committed by a few fringe elements. "We strongly and unequivocally condemn all acts of violence, intimidation, arson, and destruction of properties", the interim government said in a statement on Friday. Highlighting the nation's ongoing democratic transition, the statement said, "This is a critical moment in our country's history. We cannot and must not allow it to be derailed by those few who thrive on chaos and reject peace." The government also stressed the significance of the upcoming elections and referendum, calling them "not merely political exercises, but a solemn national commitment." It added, "This promise is inseparable from the dream for which Shaheed Sharif Osman Hadi gave his life. Honouring his sacrifice demands restraint, responsibility, and a firm commitment to reject hatred."



HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORT  
HIGHLIGHTS RISE IN SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT OF EXILED CHINESE  
ACTIVISTS

**Diary Times Desk :** China's authorities have long attempted to quash dissent internationally, but there has been a troubling rise in harassment involving sexually explicit letters aimed at activists outside its borders, as highlighted in a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW). Carmen Lau and Ted Hui, activists from Hong Kong now living in exile, face arrest warrants in Hong Kong due to the repressive National Security Law. They disclosed last week that unknown individuals were disseminating sexually explicit deepfakes of them and their families in the United Kingdom and Australia. Although police inquiries in both nations have been unable to determine the source of these images, a Chinese government spokesperson defended the action of pursuing "wanted fugitives" as "legitimate and reasonable," according to the HRW report. In 2024, there was proof of direct involvement from the Chinese government in a similar incident when anonymous online accounts spread threatening and sexually explicit posts aimed at the 16-year-old daughter of Deng Yuwen, a critic of the Chinese government residing in the US; these posts were later traced back to Chinese security agencies.

CHINA'S SLOWDOWN DEEPENS  
AS INVESTMENT FALLS; RETAIL  
SALES HIT POST-COVID LOW IN  
NOV

**Diary Times Desk :** China's investment continued to decline in November, while retail sales experienced their slowest growth since the government lifted strict COVID-19 restrictions, as reported by The Epoch Times (TET). Industrial output increased by 4.8 per cent year over year in November, a deceleration compared to the 4.9 per cent rise reported in October, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China. This growth fell short of the economists' forecast of 5 per cent and represents the slowest growth since August 2024.

Retail sales, which measure consumer spending, grew by 1.3 per cent year over year, slowing from a 2.9 per cent increase in October. This outcome marked the lowest performance since December 2022, when China's stringent COVID-19 measures were lifted, as noted in the TET report. "November figures indicate widespread weakness in domestic activity, mainly due to a reduction in fiscal expenditures," said Huang Zichun, an economist at Capital Economics.

## RBI DISCUSSES GLOBAL, DOMESTIC ECONOMIC SITUATION, CHALLENGES AT BOARD MEETING

**Diary Times Desk :** The Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) discussed the global and domestic economic situation and associated challenges at the 620th meeting held in Hyderabad under the Chairmanship of Governor Sanjay Malhotra. "The Board discussed global and domestic economic situation and associated challenges. It approved the risk-based deposit insurance framework for banks. The Board also reviewed the activities of select Central Office Departments and the draft Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India, 2024-25," the central bank said in a statement. "The Board approved the risk-based deposit insurance framework for banks and also reviewed the activities of select Central Office Departments and the draft Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India, 2024-25," it added. At the meeting, Deputy Governors T. Rabi Sankar, Swaminathan J., Dr. Poonam Gupta, Shirish Chandra Murmu and other Directors of the Central Board namely Nagaraju Maddirala, Secretary, Department of Financial Services; Satish K. Marathe, Revathy Iyer, Pankaj Ramanbhai Patel and Dr. Ravindra H. Dholakia attended the meeting.

## LEJIT.AI LAUNCHES MOBILE APP TO MAKE LEGAL ASSISTANCE ACCESSIBLE FOR COMMON PEOPLE

**Diary Times Desk :** Lejit.ai Launches Mobile App to Make Legal Assistance Accessible for Common People Trivandrum (Kerala) [India], December 19: Lejit.ai, a legal technology startup from Kerala, has announced the launch and expansion of its mobile application aimed at simplifying access to legal assistance for the general public. Built with the motto "Legal assistance for common people," Lejit.ai seeks to bridge the gap between the legal system and everyday citizens by making legal knowledge easier to understand and act upon. Legal processes are often perceived as complex, intimidating, and inaccessible, especially for individuals without prior legal exposure. Lejit.ai addresses this challenge by enabling users involved in legal matters to clearly understand what steps need to be taken, what precautions must be followed.

## STOCK MARKETS SURGE AFTER FOUR DAYS OF DECLINE; SENSEX JUMPS 447 POINTS

**Diary Times Desk :** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged on Friday after four days of decline in tandem with a rally in global markets as a lower-than-expected US consumer price inflation data for November reinforced expectations of further interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. Fresh foreign fund inflows also drove the equity markets higher. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 447.55 points, or 0.53 per cent, to settle at 84,929.36. During the day, it surged 585.69 points, or 0.69 per cent, to 85,067.50. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 150.85 points, or 0.58 per cent, to 25,966.40. From the 30-Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics, Power Grid, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Asian Paints, Reliance Industries, and Bajaj Finserv were among the biggest gainers. However, HCL Tech, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank, and Sun Pharma were the laggards. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled in positive territory. Equity markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended higher on Thursday. "Investor sentiment remained steady and constructive, supported by favourable global cues as renewed optimism around further monetary easing by the US Federal Reserve—following lower-than-expected November inflation data—boosted global risk appetite."



## ADANI TO INVEST RS 1 LAKH CRORE IN AIRPORTS; EYES AGGRESSIVE BIDS IN NEXT PRIVATISATION ROUND

**Diary Times Desk :** Adani Group plans to invest Rs 1 lakh crore in its airports business over the next five years, betting on sustained growth in India's aviation sector, which is expected to expand at 15-16 per cent annually, a top group official said. "On the airport side, Rs 1-lakh crore in the next five years," Jeet Adani, Director of Adani Airports and younger son of billionaire Gautam Adani, told PTI ahead of the start of commercial operations at Navi Mumbai International Airport on December 25. Navi Mumbai International Airport will become the latest addition to the Adani Group's expanding airport portfolio, further strengthening its presence in India's aviation infrastructure. The airport, being developed by Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMIAL) in which the Adani Group holds a 74 per cent stake, is scheduled to commence commercial operations on December 25. Built at an initial cost of Rs 19,650 crore, the first phase will have a capacity to handle 20 million passengers annually, with plans to scale up to 90 million passengers over time, easing capacity constraints at Mumbai's existing airport and supporting long-term growth in the region's air traffic.



## "WE WILL BE ADDING THREE MORE TERMINALS": JEET ADANI ON NAVI MUMBAI AIRPORT

**Diary Times Desk :** As Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) is set to begin commercial operations, Jeet Adani, the Director at Adani Airports Holdings Limited, on Friday shared the upcoming plans in terms of adding more terminals, runways and connectivity modes. Speaking to ANI, Jeet Adani said, "We'll have the first terminal operational. The terminal has a capacity of about 20 million passengers, and the first southern runway is going to be operational. As we grow in terms of traffic, we will be adding three more terminals, another runway, cross-field taxiways, metro connectivity, two kinds of metro connectivity, one towards Mumbai, one towards Panvel, water taxi and helipad." "So every form of transportation will be connected as a true multi-modal hub should be. This will keep going on for the next 15 years. So we see between 2038-2040, that time period is where we'll see the entire Navi Mumbai fully built out," he added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 8 inaugurated the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), one of India's most ambitious infrastructure projects and a defining milestone in the nation's aviation journey. Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said that Mumbai's long wait was over as the city had now received its second international airport. He added that the Navi Mumbai International Airport would play a major role in establishing the region as Asia's biggest connectivity hub.





WORKINDIA RAISES INR 97 CRORE  
IN LATEST FUNDING ROUND LED BY  
AAVISHKAAR CAPITAL

**Diary Times Desk :** India's leading blue and grey-collar job platform secures Series B investment to expand operations and accelerate growth National, 19 December 2025: WorkIndia, India's largest recruitment platform for blue and grey-collar workers, has raised ₹97 crore in its latest funding round. Aavishkaar Capital led the round with ₹75 crore, while existing investor BEENEXT Capital invested ₹22 crore. This Series B fundraise will be used to upgrade WorkIndia's technology platform, improve job matching between employers and candidates, expand into new high-demand regions, and drive innovation. With sustained profitability, WorkIndia further cements its position as the category builder in the blue-collar recruitment space. Since its launch, WorkIndia has revolutionised how millions of Indians find work. The platform connects workers across 50+ job categories, including delivery, retail, telecalling, field sales, and warehouse operations, with employers seeking reliable talent.

LATENTFORCE RAISES \$1.7M  
SEED CO-LED BY IDEASPRING  
CAPITAL AND YALI CAPITAL  
TO ACCELERATE AGENTIC AI-  
DRIVEN ENTERPRISE  
SOFTWARE MODERNISATION

**Diary Times Desk :** LatentForce, an AI-native platform for large-scale enterprise code migrations and software modernisation, has raised \$1.7M in a Seed funding round co-led by Ideaspring Capital and Yali Capital. The funds will be used to strengthen its proprietary migration models and accelerate expansion across India and worldwide. Founded in 2024, LatentForce is building an Agentic AI platform for large-scale enterprise code migrations and software overhauls, a market estimated at US\$22.7 billion today and projected to exceed US\$50 billion by 2031. While most AI coding tools focus on assisting individual developers, LatentForce is building specialised AI systems for large-scale enterprise modernisation. The company leverages efficient, task-specific Small Language Models (SLMs) purpose-built for legacy transformation, enabling organisations to upgrade decades-old software.

INDIA IS ENGAGING WITH COUNTRIES TO EXPORT FORMAL HALAL-  
CERTIFIED PRODUCTS: PIYUSH GOYAL

**Diary Times Desk :** India is engaging with countries where Halal certification for the export of meat and meat products is mandatory, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday. The India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed yesterday facilitates mutual recognition arrangements for Halal certification, acceptance of India's NPOP certification for organic products, and enhanced cooperation in standards and conformity assessment. "For many years, three-four years, we have been trying to get the Gulf countries who are the largest users of Halal, other than some other Islamic countries, to accept formal Halal certified products rather than the current informal processes," Piyush Goyal told reporters at a press conference focused on the Oman CEPA. Recognition of India's halal certification in Oman will reduce duplication of testing and certification, lower costs and improve market access for Indian exporters. "We are going to focus on all the countries...We're going to engage with all 55 countries on a mission mode wherever Halal certification is largely required," he said.



PARLIAMENT'S WINTER SESSION HEAVY ON FINANCIAL AGENDA, SOME  
KEY BILLS PASSED



**Diary Times Desk :** The Winter Session of Parliament was heavy on the financial agenda, with several key legislations passed, including the bill to amend insurance laws, the Appropriation Bills, and the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill. The session, which began on December 1, was adjourned sine die on Friday. During the session, 10 Bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha and eight Bills were passed by the upper House of Parliament. The two Houses passed eight bills during the session which had 15 sittings. The financial and related bills passed by the two Houses include the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, the Appropriation (No. 4) Bill, 2025, the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) Bill, 2025. The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025, (SHANTI Bill), which opens up the nuclear sector to private entities, was passed by the two Houses of the Parliament. Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025 seeks to raise the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in Indian insurance companies from the existing 74 per cent to 100 per cent. The government said the move is intended to attract stable, long-term foreign capital, facilitate technology transfer, and enhance insurance penetration and social security coverage across the country. First Batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for the year 2025-26 were discussed and related Appropriation Bills were passed by the two Houses. The Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, was also passed by the two Houses. It seeks to revise the excise duties on tobacco and related products after the expiry of the GST compensation cess.

## 7 YEARS ON, RAJA SANSI BLAST ACCUSED GETS DEFAULT BAIL FROM HIGH COURT

**Diary Times Desk :** Nearly seven years after Raja Sansi grenade attack left almost 20 injured and three killed, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has ordered the release of an accused on default bail. The bench of Justice Gurvinder Singh Gill and Justice Ramesh Kumari held that the challan was not filed within 90 days, which expired in February 2019. As such, there was “no room to come to a conclusion other than” that the accused had acquired an indefeasible right to default bail. Allowing the appeal filed through counsel Vipul Jindal, the bench set aside the April 11, 2019 order rejecting default bail and directed the appellant’s release. Appellant Avtar Singh, along with a co-accused had moved a joint application for default bail immediately after expiry of the statutory period. That plea, however, was dismissed on the premise that the time for investigation stood extended from 90 to 180 days. The high court observed that the very order granting extension was later set aside by Amritsar Additional Sessions Judge/Exclusive Court.

## AJNALA POLICE STATION ATTACK SHOOK NATION'S CONSCIENCE, SAYS HC; TURNS DOWN MULTIPLE BAIL PLEAS

**Diary Times Desk :** Holding that the violent attack on the Ajnala police station shook the “conscience of the entire nation” and amounted to a direct challenge to the sovereignty and integrity of the State, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has turned down at least five bail pleas. In one of the bail pleas filed by Gurmeet Singh Gill, alias Gurmeet Singh Bakkanwala, Justice Surya Partap Singh ruled that the case shocked the conscience of the entire nation. An unlawful mob – including the petitioner – under the influence of “one Amritpal Singh”, took the law into their own hands by attacking the police station with an ill-intention to get released one of their associates from police custody instead of taking legal recourse. The Bench added that a careful perusal of record showed that the allegations against the petitioner were that he was a member of the mob armed with deadly weapons “which defied not only the directions issued by the public servants -- the police officers.

## HIMACHAL POLICE OFFICERS BELOW SP RANK BARRED FROM MEDIA INTERACTIONS

**Diary Times Desk :** The officials below the rank of Superintendent of Police (SP) will not brief or interact with the media on matters relating to crime, law and order, investigations, policing policies and other official issues. As per the circular issued by the Director General of Police, only the SP of the district and the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) of the Range are authorised to formally interact with the media on matters. And even they will need to have prior approval of Police Headquarters. The circular debars all other officers, including SDPOs and SHOs, to address the media in their official capacity, issue statements or comments to print, electronic or social media, or give interviews, briefings or reactions on official matters, unless specifically authorised in writing by the competent authority.



## SANJAULI MOSQUE: HC DIRECTION PUTS DEMOLITION BACK ON TRACK

**Diary Times Desk :** Complying with High Court directions, the Sanjauli Mosque Committee and the Himachal Pradesh Waqf Board on Thursday resumed demolition of the unauthorised floors of the controversial mosque in Sanjauli. In a recent hearing, the Himachal Pradesh High Court ordered the committee and the Waqf Board to raze the top three floors, which had earlier been declared illegal by the Commissioner's Court of the Shimla Municipal Corporation. Initially, the committee demolished the top two floors of the five-storeyed structure, acting on the Commissioner's orders. The work was halted after the directive was challenged before the District Court. The District Court upheld the Commissioner's ruling and instructed complete demolition of the illegal construction. The Waqf Board then moved the High Court, which granted status-quo protection to the first two floors but directed that the remaining illegal floors be removed. The next hearing is scheduled for March 9. A Waqf Board office-bearer said the committee had already pulled down the top two floors and half of the third floor, but work stalled due to financial constraints. He added that the ongoing demolition is being undertaken with their own resources and would be completed soon.

## SHIMLA WINTER CARNIVAL TO LIGHT UP HOLIDAY SEASON EVERY YEAR

**Diary Times Desk :** The Shimla Winter Carnival is poised to become a permanent feature of the hill town's festive calendar, with the state government granting approval for the event to be organised annually from December 24 to January 1. The decision, formalised through a notification issued by Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, has been widely welcomed by tourists, residents and stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sector. According to the notification, the carnival will now be held every year during the peak holiday season, aligning with Christmas, New Year's Eve and the New Year celebrations. The responsibility for organising the event has been entrusted to the Shimla Municipal Corporation (SMC), giving it a formal administrative framework and continuity. Welcoming the move, SMC Mayor Surinder Chauhan described the decision as a major boost for Shimla's tourism-driven economy. He said the winter holiday period is among the most significant for the town, as lakhs of visitors from across the country and abroad arrive to celebrate Christmas and usher in the New Year. Holding a structured cultural carnival during this time, he noted, adds value to the tourist experience while providing a fillip to local businesses, hoteliers.

**YOUR HOROSCOPE**  
20-12-2025

## 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.



**HARYANA HOUSE PASSES  
RESOLUTION IN THANKING  
ORGANISERS FOR GURU TEG  
BAHADUR'S MARTYRDOM  
ANNIVERSARY EVENTS**

**Diary Times Desk :** Wearing a saffron turban and striking a clear note of Sikh outreach, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini today led the Haryana Vidhan Sabha in unanimously adopting a resolution expressing gratitude to organisations and individuals who contributed to the statewide observance of the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur. On the opening day of the winter session, the House passed the resolution thanking the Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (HSGMC), the Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Shaheedi Diwas Organising Committee, public representatives, social service organisations and civil institutions for successfully organising commemorative programmes across Haryana. The House also expressed its gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who paid homage to the ninth Sikh Guru at the grand congregation held at Jyotisar, Kurukshetra, on November 25 and participated in the International Gita Mahotsav. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mahipal Dhandu moved the resolution, after which members cutting across party lines recalled the sacrifices of the Sikh Gurus, with special reference to Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur. Several members described him as "Hind ki Chadar", stating that he laid down his life to protect faith, freedom of belief and human dignity, and that his teachings would continue to guide future generations.

**DENSE FOG GRIPS PUNJAB,  
HARYANA; HOSHIARPUR  
SHIVERS AT 4.8°C**

**Diary Times Desk :** The winter chill intensified at many places in Punjab and Haryana on Friday as a thick blanket of fog enveloped several areas in both states. Hoshiarpur in Punjab emerged as the coldest place in the region, recording a minimum temperature of 4.8°C, according to the local meteorological department. Fog reduced visibility at several places in both Punjab and Haryana on Friday morning, officials said. Pathankot notched a low of 8.7°C, while the minimum temperature in Bathinda dropped to 5.2°C. Faridkot and Gurdaspur recorded lows of 5.8 and 6°C, respectively. Among the other places in Punjab, Amritsar recorded a low of 9.3°C.

**SC REFUSES TO STAY CBI PROBE INTO DA CASE AGAINST SUSPENDED PUNJAB DIG  
HARCHARAN SINGH BHULLAR**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain suspended Punjab Police DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar's petition seeking a stay on the CBI probe into two FIRs lodged against him in a disproportionate assets case. A bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said the Punjab and Haryana High Court was seized of a similar petition filed by Bhullar. Bhullar has challenged the December 4 order of the high court which had denied interim relief of stay on the CBI proceedings and adjourned his plea for hearing in January. As senior counsel Vikram Chaudhary, representing Bhullar, sought a direction for deciding on interim relief, CJI Kant said, "It's better, we don't open our mouths. Don't invite harsh observations from us." Chaudhary submitted that the high court erred in adjourning the matter by a month without considering the prayer for interim relief. He said it was a case where the CBI has wrongly assumed jurisdiction in violation of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, as the state's consent for the CBI has already been withdrawn.



**SC ISSUES NOTICE TO PUNJAB GOVT ON SAD  
LEADER BIKRAM SINGH MAJITHIA'S PLEA FOR BAIL**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Punjab Vigilance Bureau on Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia's petition challenging the Punjab and Haryana High Court's order denying him bail in a disproportionate assets case. A Bench led by Justice Vikram Nath, however, refused to consider his prayer for interim bail. Asking the Punjab Vigilance Bureau to respond to Majithia's petition challenging the December 4 order of the high court, it posted the matter for hearing on January 19. The high court had dismissed his bail plea, saying the possibility of him influencing the investigation could not be ruled out. Directing the Bureau to complete its probe in three months, the high court had said Majithia could seek bail after that. The Punjab Vigilance Bureau arrested Majithia on June 25 in the disproportionate assets (DA) case that allegedly involved accumulation of Rs 540 crore of wealth. The DA case FIR against Majithia stemmed from an ongoing probe into a 2021 drug case by a Punjab Police SIT. The FIR was registered on the basis of a June 2025 report of the SIT. Majithia is lodged in the New Nabha Jail, Patiala. A Mohali court had rejected his bail plea in August. The Vigilance Bureau filed an over 40,000-page chargesheet.

**62-YEAR-OLD REWARI HOME-MAKER  
WINS NATIONAL SHOOTING GOLD**



**Diary Times Desk :** Sushma Yadav, a 62-year-old Rewari home-maker, defied age norms by winning gold in Senior Masters' 10-m pistol shooting at the 68th National Shooting Championship in New Delhi. She made history as Haryana's first gold medallist in this category. "Sushma's achievement brings laurels to Haryana. She's a skilled home-maker who proved age isn't a barrier with determination and practice," said her husband Anil Yadav. Sushma, a state-level gold medallist, credited her coach Raman and family for her success.

**PUNJAB GOVERNMENT TO CONVENE SPECIAL SESSION OVER REPLACEMENT OF  
MGNREGA WITH VB G RAM G**



**Diary Times Desk :** As voices of Opposition against the replacement of MGNREGA with VB G RAM G go shriller, the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab has announced that it would convene a special session of Punjab Vidhan Sabha on this issue. Announcing the decision to convene the session in the second week of January, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said, "The BJP government at the Centre is trying to hit the livelihoods of poor by replacing the "MGNREGA" scheme. A special session of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha will be called in the second week of January to raise the voice of Punjabis against this oppression." The Special Session of Vidhan Sabha, held on November 24, was prorogued by the Governor on December 17. Sources in the government have told The Tribune that the decision to convene the special Vidhan Sabha session was taken at a meeting of party top leaders, including AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, on Thursday evening. He is presently on a three-day tour of the state. The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill was introduced in the Parliament and was passed amidst protests by the Opposition party MPs. Since the new funding model of the scheme will also require states to chip in, its implementation will be a problem for cash-strapped states like Punjab.

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

"Invention, 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.



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.

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.

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.

It's 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.



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.

"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



"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?"

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.



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 Chemmanai 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. Chemmanai 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.





FIVE REASONS ROLEX COLLECTORS LOVE THE DAYTONA

**Diary Times Desk :** Rolex and Daytona are two evocative names that came together decades before the first Daytona Reference 6239 began production in 1963. In the early 1930s, most watches were tested on the wrists of athletes and adventurers, and not exclusively in hi-tech laboratories as they are today. Rolex founder Hans Wilsdorf, however, recognised the advertising potential of motorsport, and signed a contract with the racing driver Sir Malcolm Campbell.

On 7 March 1935, Campbell set one of his final records on the sand track at Daytona Beach, increasing the world land speed record to 445.472 kmh. (He would later improve this record one more time, but not at Daytona.) Years later, in 1991, Rolex became the main sponsor of the 24 Hours of Daytona race at Daytona International Speedway.

A product gains credibility if it is worn by a figure celebrated for being authentic — particularly if there is no payment involved. When the actress Joanne Woodward gave her husband, Paul Newman, a Rolex Daytona as a lucky charm in 1968, it marked the beginning of the actor's enduring affection for the brand. At that time, Newman was not under contract to Rolex as an ambassador, yet he and the Daytona formed an unbeatable promotional duo.

The atypical, and much rarer, dial now associated with the 'Paul Newman' differs in small ways from the traditional Daytona dial: it has Art Deco numerals, hash marks ending in a square at the end, and a small notch between the outer minute track and the centre of the dial. These little differences mark the 'Paul Newman' out as one of the most desirable vintage watches in the world.

One thing has been and remains consistent for all the movements used by Rolex in its chronographs: outstanding reliability. Technically, however, the movements of the first Daytona watches lagged behind other chronograph movements of the time. It was not until 1988 — more than 20 years after the launch of the Daytona — that Rolex decided to improve the highly successful 'Zenith' automatic calibre, El Primero, making it one of the best automatic chronographs of its time. The Rolex Daytona's simple yet perfectly balanced design is virtually unmatched in any other chronograph model. Strong contrasting colours, from the main to the subsidiary dials, in a superbly composed gold or steel case, make this watch irresistible. Jewelled and coloured-dial Daytonas show that it is possible to add gemstones to a sports watch. Today, Daytonas are available in a dazzling range of materials and designs — such as the turquoise dial ref. 116509 or the blue sodalite hardstone dial ref. 116519 — while remaining true to their sporting origins.



ART AND OBJECTS COLLECTED BY GENERATIONS OF THE STERN FAMILY: 'THIS COLLECTION HAS REMAINED UNKNOWN — ITS APPEARANCE ON THE MARKET NOW IS INCREDIBLY EXCITING'

**Diary Times Desk :**

A family of distinguished bankers and entrepreneurs since the 17th century, the Sterns are also renowned collectors, patrons and philanthropists. For generations, they have collected art at the very highest level, served on the boards of cultural, educational and scientific institutions across Europe, and donated important works to prestigious museums, including the Louvre.

'The Stern family has now chosen to write a new chapter in its history by offering at auction the works assembled by three generations of passionate collectors before them,' writes the French journalist Pierre Assouline in the introduction to the sale catalogue.

Assembled over the course of more than a century, the collection offered for sale reflects the connoisseurship and eclectic interests of Edgard Salomon Stern (1854-1937), head of the French branch of the family, his daughter-in-law Alice Stern (1906-2008), and their descendants.

On 11 December 2025, Christie's in Paris will present Les Stern: une famille de collectionneurs, alongside an online sale until 12 December, offering more than 350 lots ranging from Old Master paintings to furniture, sculpture and works of decorative art, including enamels, silver, bronzes and glass. The sales include works by some of the most celebrated European artists and makers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, from Boucher, Fragonard, Robert and Tissot to the ébéniste Roger Vandercruse called Lacroix and glass designer Emile Gallé. Many pieces also boast prestigious provenances. There are works once owned by the renowned Parisian couturier Jacques Doucet, Sir Richard Wallace, David David-Weill, the Dukes of Hamilton in Scotland and the Comte d'Artois.

'The dazzling and varied works of art demonstrate the enthusiasms and personal tastes of the different collectors within the family,' says Charles Cator, deputy chairman of Christie's International. 'What is even more remarkable about this collection, though, is that it has remained unknown, so its appearance on the market now is incredibly exciting.' In the 18th century, the Sterns were among the most powerful merchants in Frankfurt. By the mid-19th century, much like the Rothschilds, with whom they established close and lasting ties, they had founded successful banking businesses across Europe, many of which gave rise to major institutions that still exist today.



BARCELONA HEAVYWEIGHT A SERIOUS DOUBT FOR SEVILLA CLASH  
DUE TO CALF STRAIN



**Diary Times Desk :** FC Barcelona will bring down the curtains on the first half of the 2025/26 season this weekend with an away La Liga game against Villarreal.

Sitting atop the La Liga standings, Hansi Flick & co. will hope to go into the mid-season break on a high by securing all three points against the Yellow Submarine, who are third in the table.

However, leading up to the game, the Blaugrana have been handed a fresh fitness concern with key midfielder Pedri. Indeed, according to AS, Pedri is a serious doubt for the game between Barcelona and Villarreal due to a calf muscle strain.

As confirmed earlier today, the 23-year-old Spanish international did not train with the group and worked by himself inside the facilities due to the overload in the soleus muscle of his left leg.

BARCELONA PRESIDENT TOLD TO BREAK  
RELATIONS WITH REAL MADRID: ‘THE BEST  
TEAM IN HISTORY IS BEING QUESTIONED’

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona and Real Madrid are experiencing a tense relationship after multiple clashes, open statements and accusations in public being drawn about each other.

Los Blancos bear a brunt of the responsibility for the same, especially with the president Florentino Perez openly lashing out at Barcelona and accusing them openly of manipulating referees and results through the Negreira scandal.

Barcelona, understandably, have not remained silent and have gone on the offensive as well, with Joan Laporta openly coming out to hit back at Perez during the Christmas dinner last night. Speaking on El Partidazo de COPE in a recent interview (h/t SPORT), former Barcelona presidential candidate and pre-candidate for the upcoming election Victor Font gave his views on the situation between Barcelona and Real Madrid.

He began by agreeing with Joan Laporta for a change and admitting that Real Madrid are blatantly in the wrong. “I agree one hundred per cent with what the president of Barça has said, and I even go much further,” he said.

BARCELONA WELL-POSITIONED TO SIGN  
15-YEAR-OLD ENGLISH ATTACKING  
PRODIGY

**Diary Times Desk :** FC Barcelona are not only working to improve the first team, but also to strengthen their youth system with promising players to complete their development at La Masia.

As recently reported, the Blaugrana are working to sign Hamza Abdelkarim, a 17-year-old striker from Egyptian giants Al Ahly.

On top of that, Barça have also held talks to sign Jesse Bisiwu, a teenage wonderkid from Belgian outfit Club Brugge.

Now, it appears that another exciting young talent, this time from England, has caught the attention of the La Liga champions. Indeed, according to Mundo Deportivo, Barcelona are making moves for Ajay Tavares, an English winger from Norwich City’s youth team, who will turn 16 on 28 December.

A powerful left winger who can also play as a centre-forward, Tavares possesses an European passport, which would allow him to leave the United Kingdom before the age of 18.

VILLARREAL MANAGER HAILS  
BARCELONA WONDERKID –  
‘HAS THE MATURITY OF A 30-  
YEAR-OLD’

**Diary Times Desk :** FC Barcelona will aim to retain their lead at the top of the league table as they take on Villarreal on Sunday, in what will be the final match of the year for the Blaugrana.

This is a must-win game for Barcelona, considering that a defeat will not only help Real Madrid but will also allow Villarreal, who are in third place, to close the gap at the top.

Speaking ahead of this crucial match, Villarreal coach Marcelino talked about his team’s form while offering an update on injuries. With 35 points collected from 15 matches, Villarreal are punching above their weight this season, and if they can win their two extra matches at hand, they could catapult Real Madrid and become second.

But while coach Marcelino is proud of the team’s success this season, he admitted that competing with teams like Barcelona and Real Madrid will be difficult.

The coach said that a club like Villarreal can “be close” to Real Madrid or Barcelona, but clarified that it’s “difficult to challenge them for the league title.”

HANSI FLICK’S STANCE AS  
BARCELONA EAGER TO  
EXTEND HIS CONTRACT UNTIL  
2028 – REPORT

**Diary Times Desk :** Hansi Flick has a contract with Barcelona until June 2027, but he could remain on the Barcelona bench for longer.

The German coach renewed his deal in May for one additional season, but the club are interested in extending it by a further year, as reported earlier this week.

Last weekend, a meeting took place between Flick’s agent, Pini Zahavi, and club president Joan Laporta, which was later joined by sporting director Deco in Barcelona. At that meeting, the club’s senior officials conveyed to the coach’s agent their interest in extending his contract by one more year, until June 2028. According to Mundo Deportivo, despite his continuity being secured until 30 June 2027, Barcelona want Flick to begin next season with an extra year on his contract to have greater authority within the dressing room. It is also a way of showing the full confidence that the club have in him. Flick, for his part, is very happy at Barcelona and enjoys a strong relationship with both Laporta and Deco.

BARCELONA’S POSSIBLE OPPONENTS IN THE COPA DEL REY  
ROUND OF 16

**Diary Times Desk :** FC Barcelona made it through to the Round of 16 of the Copa del Rey after defeating CD Guadalajara in their first game of the competition earlier this week.

Hansi Flick’s side secured a hard-fought 2-0 victory away at Estadio Pedro Escartin, with goals coming from Andreas Christensen and Marcus Rashford. Barcelona are the current holders of the Copa del Rey trophy, having defeated arch-rivals Real Madrid in an epic finale last season thanks to a Jules Kounde extra-time goal. And, the aim for the Blaugrana will be to go all the way once again in the cup competition, with the first hurdle now crossed. Apart from Barcelona, the following teams also qualified for the Round of 16 on Tuesday: Real Sociedad, who beat Eldense 1-2; Deportivo La Coruna, who defeated Mallorca 1-0; Elche, who won 0-1 vs Eibar; and Valencia, who overcame Sporting Gijon with a 0-2 win. On Wednesday night, the following teams made it through: Cultural Leonesa, who beat Levante 1-0; Racing Santander, who won 2-1 vs Villarreal; Atletico Madrid, who won 2-3 against Atletico Baleares; Osasuna, who beat Huesca 2-4.

