

NEWS IN BRIEF

AFTER HADI, ANOTHER BANGLADESH STUDENT LEADER SHOT IN HEAD

Diary Times Desk :

Unidentified gunmen on Monday shot in the head Motaleb Shikder, a second leader of Bangladesh's violent student-led 2024 uprising. The attack took place in southwestern Khulna city, days after the killing of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi. "The Khulna Division head of NCP (National Citizen Party) and central coordinator of the party's workers front, Motaleb Shikder, was shot a few minutes ago," NCP's joint principal coordinator Mahmuda Mitu said in a Facebook post. Mitu, a doctor, said Shikder was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

The Kaler Kantha newspaper, quoting hospital sources, said Shikder was shot on the left side of his head, and he was bleeding profusely when he was brought to the facility, where the doctors started emergency treatment. The attack came days after Hadi, a prominent leader of the student-led protests last year that led to the ouster of the prime minister Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, was shot in the head on December 12.

CALCUTTA HC CONCLUDES HEARING OF PILS OVER FIASCO DURING MESSI EVENT, RESERVES JUDGEMENT

Diary Times Desk :

Hearing of three PILs over the fiasco during Argentine football legend Lionel Messi showcasing event last week that saw spectator rampage at the Salt Lake stadium here concluded before the Calcutta High Court on Monday. The petitioners sought investigation into the incident by Central agencies as well as refund of ticket price to the spectators, a section of whom had gone on a rampage over not being able to see their favourite star and early conclusion of the event following a messy situation on the ground with some people jostling around Messi, thus blocking the view of those seated on the stands. The court reserved judgment after arguments by the parties in the matter were concluded. The counsel for the West Bengal government argued before a division bench presided by Acting Chief Justice.

The CM made the remarks in the state Assembly while replying to the SP's allegations over the alleged illegal trade of codeine cough syrup.

INDIA - NEW ZEALAND NEWS

NEW ZEALAND LIBERALISES MOBILITY NORMS, OPENS LONGER WORK VISAS FOR INDIAN STUDENTS; 5,000 PROFESSIONALS TO BENEFIT



Diary Times Desk : New Zealand has liberalised mobility provisions under the concluded trade pact, enabling Indian students to access longer post-study work visas and allowing 5,000 Indian professionals, including yoga instructors and chefs, to work in the Oceania country.

The two countries on Monday announced closure of the FTA negotiations. It is expected to be signed and implemented in about 7-8 months from now. The Union Cabinet approved the pact last week. The pact also needs approval from the New Zealand parliament. As per the pact, New Zealand has, for the first time, signed an annexure on student mobility and post-study work visas with any country, offering no numerical caps and locking in 20 hours a week of work rights for Indian students.

"In terms of mobility, students who go to New Zealand to study will now be eligible for a two-year work visa if they take degree course, three-year work visa if they take bachelors degree with honors or are graduate in STEM disciplines and a four-year work visa if they do postgraduate studies in New Zealand," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal told reporters here. He also said that almost 5,000 of India professionals such as yoga instructors, chefs, Ayush professionals, IT, education teachers, nurses, caregivers, will get professional visas for serving the New Zealand economy. At present, an estimated 12,000 Indian students are enrolled in various courses in New Zealand. The pact provides for a Skilled Employment Pathways through a new Temporary Employment Entry Visa pathway for Indian professionals in skilled occupations, with a quota of 5,000 visas at any given time and a stay of up to three years.

NATIONAL HERALD CASE: DELHI HC SEEKS GANDHIS' REPLY ON ED PLEA AGAINST TRIAL COURT ORDER

Diary Times Desk : The Delhi High Court on Monday asked Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others to respond to a plea by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) challenging a trial court order refusing to take cognisance of its chargesheet against them in the National Herald case.

Justice Ravinder Dudeja issued notice to the Gandhis and others on the main petition as well as on the ED's application seeking a stay on the December 16 trial court order, which held that cognisance of the agency's complaint in the case was "impermissible in law" as it was not founded on an FIR. The high court listed the matter for further hearing on March 12, 2026. While Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the ED in the case, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and R S Cheema represented the Gandhis. In its order, the trial court said an investigation and the consequent prosecution complaint (equivalent to chargesheet) pertaining to the offence of money laundering is "not maintainable" in the absence of an FIR for the offence mentioned in the schedule to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). It said the agency's probe stemmed from a private complaint and not an FIR. It said cognisance upon the complaint being liable to be declined on a question of law, other arguments relating to the merits of the allegations are not required to be adjudicated upon. The trial court said despite receiving the complaint made by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy and the consequent summoning order in 2014, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) refrained from registering an FIR in relation to the alleged scheduled offence.



ADITYANATH'S 'TWO NAMOONE' JAB: REMARK SELF-ADMISSION OF BJP 'INFIGHTING', SAYS AKHILESH



Diary Times Desk : Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday hit back at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's "two 'namoone' in Delhi and Lucknow" barb, claiming it was directed at BJP leaders and was an open admission of internal discord within the ruling party.

The CM made the remarks in the state Assembly while replying to the SP's allegations over the alleged illegal trade of codeine cough syrup.

"There are two 'namoone' in the country, one is in Delhi and the other in Lucknow. Whenever there's a discussion in the country, these individuals flee the country. And I think the same thing is happening with your 'Babua,'" Adityanath said, apparently targeting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Yadav, without taking names.

In his political rallies, CM Adityanath has many times referred to Yadav as "Babua".

Reacting to the Chief Minister's comment, Yadav said in a post on X that the statement amounted to "self-acceptance" and showed that the tussle between Delhi and Lucknow had reached an unexpected level.

SAVE ARAVALLIS TREND: FOR PROTESTERS, THE ANSWER IS CLEAR, ONCE DAMAGED, THE HILLS CANNOT BE RESTORED



Diary Times Desk : Peaceful protests have erupted across northern India after the Supreme Court redefined the Aravalli hills—one of the world's oldest geological formations, spanning Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat and Delhi. With this, #SaveAravalli trends on social media.

Videos showing protests and explaining how the destruction of Aravalli Hills can harm both the environment and local communities are going viral on social media.

The issue began with a recent Supreme Court observation calling for a clear and uniform definition of the Aravalli Hills and Aravalli Range. The court noted that inconsistent descriptions over the years had made regulation and enforcement against illegal mining difficult.

Relying on globally accepted geological standards, the court accepted a definition that identifies hills primarily by a minimum height of 100 metres from surrounding land. The Centre supported this move, calling it a technical clarification.

The Union government has rejected claims that protections are being diluted. It says: The new definition brings clarity and uniformity across states. Mining remains banned in protected forests, eco-sensitive zones, wetlands and inviolate areas. No new mining leases are allowed within the Aravalli hills. Only a small fraction (around 0.19-2%) of the total area could potentially be mined, and only after detailed studies and approvals.

MAMATA BANERJEE

MAMATA BLAMES EC FOR 'GROSS ERRORS' IN BENGAL DRAFT ROLLS, DUBS SIR 'BLUNDER RIDDLED'



Diary Times Desk : West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday lashed out at the Election Commission, alleging that there were "gross errors" in the draft rolls published following the enumeration phase of the SIR in the state.

Addressing a meeting of TMC's Booth Level Agents (BLAs) at the Netaji Indoor Stadium here, she dubbed it an exercise "riddled with blunders from A to Z".

Banerjee also accused the poll panel of housing a "BJP agent in its office" and "altering electoral rolls as per his advise".

She alleged that the EC was appointing observers without informing the state government, and working to foster the interests of the saffron camp. "The EC is working only as per the directions of the BJP. There are gross errors in mapping of voters during the enumeration phase of the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in the state. The exercise is a blunder from beginning to end," the CM asserted. Alleging that thousands of "legitimate voters" have found their names deleted from the draft rolls, Banerjee said, "We don't know how the problems of so many genuine electors can be solved in so little time." "I am told that a BJP agent is sitting in the EC office, and it is deleting names as per his wishes.

TRIAL OF ALL 7 ACCUSED IN ZUBEEN GARG DEATH CASE GETS UNDER WAY IN SESSIONS COURT



Diary Times Desk : All the seven accused in the death of singer Zubeen Garg appeared virtually before a sessions court here, as the trial in the case got under way on Monday. The Kamrup (Metro) District and Sessions Court, after examining the accused via video-conferencing, fixed the next date of hearing on January 3, 2026. It will consider framing of charges on the date of the next hearing, a senior lawyer said. The court will call for their production, either in person or virtually, to ask them whether they plead guilty or will stand for trial in the case, he said. Garg had gone to attend the North East India Festival (NEIF) in Singapore, where he died under mysterious circumstances while swimming in the sea on September 19. The accused – NEIF chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, the singer's secretary Siddhartha Sharma, his cousin Sandipan Garg, and two personal security officers (PSOs) Nandeshwar Bora and Paresh Baishya appeared from the Baksa Jail, while musician Shekharjyoti Goswami and singer Amitprava Mahanta were present online from Haflong Jail.

INDIA, NEW ZEALAND SEAL LANDMARK FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IN RECORD 9 MONTHS



Diary Times Desk : India and New Zealand on Monday announced the successful conclusion of a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA), with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon jointly unveiling the pact during a telephone call, signalling a major expansion of bilateral, economic and strategic ties. Described by both sides as historic, ambitious and mutually beneficial, the India-New Zealand FTA was concluded in record nine months after negotiations were formally launched during PM Luxon's visit to India in March 2025. The rapid closure of talks, the two leaders said, reflected strong political will and a shared ambition to take the relationship to a higher trajectory. According to an official statement, the agreement is expected to significantly deepen bilateral economic engagement by enhancing market access, promoting investment flows and strengthening strategic cooperation.

It is also projected to open new opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students and youth in both countries across a range of sectors.

GUJARAT MAN CAPTURED IN UKRAINE PLEADS MODI GOVT FOR HELP, WARNS INDIANS TRAVELLING TO RUSSIA

Diary Times Desk : A 22-year-old man from Gujarat's Morbi town, captured by Ukrainian forces while fighting for the Russian military, has sent a video message to his family here, making an emotional appeal for help from the Indian government for his release. The man, Sahil Mohamed Hussein Majothi, urged the Central Government as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi to facilitate his release from captivity so that he can return home and reunite with his family. In the latest video received by his Morbi-based mother Hasinaben on her mobile phone, Majothi can be seen and heard claiming he was tricked into joining the Russian military and eventually surrendered to Ukrainian forces during the ongoing war between the two nations. Earlier in October, the Ukrainian military had released a video announcing Majothi's surrender. In the latest video, the Gujarat resident can be heard saying he came to Russia in 2024 to study at a university. Majothi claimed he was sentenced to seven years in jail on drug-related charges and offered an opportunity to sign a contract with the Russian military to avoid further punishment. "Though I was not involved in the (drug) crime, I was sentenced to seven years in prison. During my jail term, I was lured by some Russian police officers into signing a war contract, which was my biggest mistake," he stated.

BIHAR CM NITISH KUMAR, HIS DEPUTY SAMRAT CHOUDHARY CALL ON PM MODI, SHAH



Diary Times Desk : Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah during his first visit to the national capital after retaining charge of the eastern state a month ago following the NDA's landslide victory in the assembly election. Kumar, accompanied by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Samrat Choudhary and JD(U) leader and Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, met Modi and Shah separately and is believed to have discussed various issues—both development and political—related to the state. "Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri @NitishKumar, Deputy CM, Shri @samrat4bjp and Union Minister, Shri @LalanSingh_1 met Prime Minister @narendramodi today," the Prime Minister's Office said on 'X'. Earlier, the chief minister, along with his deputy Choudhary and Union Minister Singh, met Shah at his residence. "Met Chief Minister of Bihar Shri @NitishKumar ji, Union Minister Shri @LalanSingh_1 ji, and the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar Shri @samrat4bjp ji. Under the leadership of Modi ji and Nitish ji, the NDA government is committed to taking public welfare and good governance in the state to even greater heights," Shah said in a message on 'X' in Hindi.

AIR INDIA'S MUMBAI-BOUND PLANE SUFFERS ENGINE SHUTDOWN; RETURNS TO DELHI

Diary Times Desk : A Mumbai-bound Air India Boeing 777 aircraft made an emergency landing in the national capital in less than an hour after taking off due to its engine shutdown on Monday morning, according to sources. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will be conducting a probe and the civil aviation ministry has sought details from Air India about the incident. The plane, carrying around 335 people, was airborne for nearly an hour before returning to Delhi. The aircraft made an emergency landing, sources said. "The crew operating flight AI887 from Delhi to Mumbai on December 22 decided to return to Delhi shortly after take-off due to a technical issue as per standard operating procedure," Air India said in a statement.

The aircraft landed safely at Delhi and the passengers and crew have disembarked, the airline said and regretted the inconvenience caused due to the unforeseen situation.

WOLF SNATCHES 3-YEAR-OLD BOY SLEEPING NEXT TO MOTHER, MAULS HIM TO DEATH IN UP'S BAHRAICH

Diary Times Desk : A wolf snatched a three-year-old boy sleeping next to his mother on the verandah of their house, dragged him to a field, and mauled him to death in the Kaiserganj tehsil in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district on Monday morning, a senior forest department official said. So far, 12 people, including an elderly couple, have died in wolf attacks in the Kaiserganj area, while 32 people have been injured, officials said. Divisional Forest Officer of Bahraich Forest Division Ram Singh Yadav said, "On Monday at around 4.30 am, a wild animal snatched Ansh, son of Shiv Manohar, who was sleeping on a straw mat in the verandah of his house with his mother in the Rasulpur Dareta village, located amidst a populated area. "Upon receiving the news, forest department teams, along with villagers, launched a search operation. At noon, the child's mutilated body was recovered about one kilometre from the house. Both of the child's hands and one leg had been eaten. The manner in which the child was carried away and eaten confirms that it was a wolf attack," Yadav said.

DELHI AIR POLLUTION: OVER 2.12 LAKH PUCs ISSUED IN FOUR DAYS, 10,000 VEHICLES FAIL TESTS UNDER GRAP-IV

Diary Times Desk : More than 2.12 lakh new Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates were issued in the last four days following the strict implementation of GRAP-IV measures, even as around 10,000 vehicles failed mandatory emission tests, Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said on Monday. The minister also warned of stringent action against polluting industries and private offices flouting work-from-home directives. Addressing a press briefing, Sirsa said the strict restrictions imposed under GRAP-IV over the past four days have begun yielding results. He said more than two lakh vehicles have undergone PUC tests since the "No PUC, No Fuel" rule came into effect, while nearly 10,000 vehicles failed mandatory emission tests. The minister said the government has further intensified enforcement from Monday to identify polluting industrial units, adding that those found violating air-pollution norms will be sealed immediately without notice and also warned that industries failing to apply for the mandatory Online Consent Management (OCM) by the December 31 deadline will face strict action. Sirsa also said the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee are jointly identifying illegal and unauthorised industrial units operating in the city.

NATIONAL HERALD CASE: DELHI HC SEEKS GANDHIS' REPLY ON ED PLEA AGAINST TRIAL COURT ORDER

Diary Times Desk : The Delhi High Court on Monday asked Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others to respond to a plea by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) challenging a trial court order refusing to take cognisance of its chargesheet against them in the National Herald case. Justice Ravinder Dudeja issued notice to the Gandhis and others on the main petition as well as on the ED's application seeking a stay on the December 16 trial court order, which held that cognisance of the agency's complaint in the case was "impermissible in law" as it was not founded on an FIR. The high court listed the matter for further hearing on March 12, 2026. While Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the ED in the case, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and R S Cheema represented the Gandhis. In its order, the trial court said an investigation and the consequent prosecution complaint (equivalent to chargesheet) pertaining to the offence of money laundering is "not maintainable" in the absence of an FIR for the offence mentioned in the schedule to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). It said the agency's probe stemmed from a private complaint and not an FIR.

BENGAL MLA HUMAYUN KABIR FLOATS NEW PARTY DAYS AFTER LAYING FOUNDATION FOR BABRI-STYLE MOSQUE

Diary Times Desk : West Bengal MLA Humayun Kabir on Monday floated a new outfit, Janata Unnayan Party, days after he was suspended by the TMC for laying the foundation stone for a Babri-style mosque in Murshidabad district. Addressing a public meeting in Beladanga, Kabir said his mission is to oust Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from power in the Assembly polls, which will be due in less than six months. "Mamata Banerjee will not be sworn in as chief minister in 2026; she will be the ex-chief minister. She is no longer the same person I knew and is now beyond the reach of the common man," he claimed. "Our party will speak for the 'aam aadmi' of the state and their upliftment," he said, adding that he consciously did not retain any remnant of the Congress or the Trinamool while naming the new outfit. Kabir, the MLA of Bharatpur, named eight candidates that his new party will field in the 2026 Assembly elections, and said he would himself contest from Rejinagar and Beldanga, both of which were won by the TMC in 2021. "I will win from both the seats that I will be contesting from," he declared, challenging the TMC to defeat him.

CALCUTTA HC CONCLUDES HEARING OF PILS OVER FIASCO DURING MESSI EVENT, RESERVES JUDGEMENT



Diary Times Desk : Hearing of three PILs over the fiasco during Argentine football legend Lionel Messi showcasing event last week that saw spectator rampage at the Salt Lake stadium here concluded before the Calcutta High Court on Monday. The petitioners sought investigation into the incident by Central agencies as well as refund of ticket price to the spectators, a section of whom had gone on a rampage over not being able to see their favourite star and early conclusion of the event following a messy situation on the ground with some people jostling around Messi, thus blocking the view of those seated on the stands. The court reserved judgment after arguments by the parties in the matter were concluded. The counsel for the West Bengal government argued before a division bench presided by Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul that the state did not sell the tickets, and it was an event organised by a private event management company.

CODEINE SYRUP SEIZED IN UP; 6 HELD IN SEPARATE OPERATIONS IN ETAH, MIRZAPUR

Diary Times Desk : The Uttar Pradesh Police have intensified their crackdown on the alleged illegal trade, diversion and distribution of regulated codeine-based cough syrup, arresting six persons in separate operations in Etah and Mirzapur districts, officials said on Monday. The action comes as the probe widened into the alleged codiene syrup trafficking racket, suspected to be involved in illicit trade estimated to be worth hundreds of crores—with links stretching across several states and possibly beyond international borders. In Etah, a joint team of the Agra anti-narcotics unit and Aliganj police recovered 47 cartons of codeine-based cough syrup, estimated to be worth around Rs 50 lakh, from a tobacco warehouse under Aliganj police station area limits Sunday night. Four persons, including a retired serviceman, were arrested on the spot, police said. According to police, the raid was carried out at a warehouse in Nagla Bani village following a tip-off. Preliminary investigation revealed that the seized.

PROTESTERS DEMONSTRATE NEAR BANGLADESH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSION IN KOLKATA OVER KILLING OF HINDU MAN

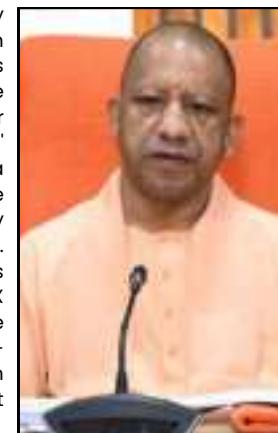
Diary Times Desk : Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari along with other party leaders and supporters on Monday staged a demonstration near the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission to protest the killing of a Bengali Hindu in the neighbouring country. Adhikari led the rally from Nizam Palace to Beckbagan where around 2,000 people squatted on the road condemning the lynching of Dipu Das at Mymensingh on December 18 night and then setting the body on fire. "We want strict punishment for all those involved in the murder of Das. We want atrocities and attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh to be stopped immediately. If there is no end to attacks on Hindus, we will come back to Bangladesh deputy high commission with 10,000 people on December 26," he threatened. Adhikari said, "Hindu outfits will block roads for some time across the state on December 24 in protest against the killing." The protestors also burnt an effigy of the head of the interim government in Bangladesh, Md Yunus.

INDIAN, FRENCH FIRMS JOIN HANDS TO PRODUCE NAVIGATION & TARGETING SYSTEMS FOR ARTILLERY GUNS, DRONES

Diary Times Desk : In a boost to the government's Make in India initiative, India Optel Limited (IOL), a Mini Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking, has signed a collaboration agreement with French firm Safran Electronics and Defense for the transfer of production of two high-precision, combat-proven systems. The SIGMA 30N Digital Ring Laser Gyro Inertial Navigation System, used in artillery guns, air defence systems, missiles and radars; and CM3-MR Direct Firing Sight, designed for artillery guns and anti-drone systems, will now be locally manufactured. The agreement was signed by Chairman-cum-Managing Director, IOL, Tushar Tripathi and Head of the Defence Global Business Unit for Safran Electronics and Defense, Alexandre Ziegler in New Delhi on Monday. Going forward from the MoU signed in January 2024, this new agreement confirms the commitment of both the partners to manufacture and support these advanced systems in India.

ADITYANATH'S 'TWO NAMOONE' JAB: REMARK SELF-ADMISSION OF BJP 'INFIGHTING', SAYS AKHILESH

Diary Times Desk : Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday hit back at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's "two 'hamoone' in Delhi and Lucknow" barb, claiming it was directed at BJP leaders and was an open admission of internal discord within the ruling party. The CM made the remarks in the state Assembly while replying to the SP's allegations over the alleged illegal trade of codeine cough syrup. "There are two 'hamoone' in the country, one is in Delhi and the other in Lucknow. Whenever there's a discussion in the country, these individuals flee the country. And I think the same thing is happening with your 'Babu,'" Adityanath said, apparently targeting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Yadav, without taking names. In his political rallies, CM Adityanath has many times referred to Yadav as "Babu". Reacting to the Chief Minister's comment, Yadav said in a post on X that the statement amounted to "self-acceptance" and showed that the tussle between Delhi and Lucknow had reached an unexpected level. "Self-admission! No one had expected that the Delhi-Lucknow fight would reach this point. People holding constitutional positions should maintain at least some sense of propriety and not cross the limits of decorum."



EPSTEIN FILES: US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE REPOSTS TRUMP'S PHOTO



Diary Times Desk : The United States Department of Justice reposted a photograph from the recent batch of Jeffrey Epstein files featuring President Donald Trump, stating that no Epstein victims were depicted in the photograph. The DOJ had temporarily removed the image for review after the Southern District of New York flagged it in order to protect victims. "The Southern District of New York flagged an image of President Trump for potential further action to protect victims. Out of an abundance of caution, the Department of Justice temporarily removed the image for further review. After the review, it was determined there is no evidence that any Epstein victims are depicted in the photograph, and it has been reposted without any alteration or redaction," DOJ said in an X post. Earlier, CNN reported that at least 16 files released in the batch of Jeffrey Epstein documents appeared to have been removed from the website, as of Sunday morning (local time). One of the files removed included a photograph of US President Donald Trump, CNN had reported on Saturday. Among other files that appear to have been removed, the majority depicted explicit artwork, showed mail slots filled with envelopes, a tiled hallway, and a notebook page with names and apartment numbers. In a press release, the DOJ stated that it is committed to transparency and redacting only what is legally required. The Department is required by law to redact identifying information about the victims, minors, or potential victims, as well as privileged material.

SHEIKH HASINA BLAMES BANGLADESH'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT FOR STRESSED RELATIONS WITH INDIA



Diary Times Desk : The spiral of violence in Bangladesh which included the lynching of a Hindu man has elicited deep concern from India, especially in the light of recent threats by radical groups to Indian missions in the country. Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina believes that the stressed relations between India and her country are completely of the making of the interim government headed by Mohammad Yunus. The former Bangladesh PM accused the Yunus government of issuing hostile statements against India and failing to protect religious minorities. "The strain you are witnessing is entirely of Yunus' making. His government issues hostile statements against India, fails to protect religious minorities, and allows extremists to dictate foreign policy, then expresses surprise when tensions rise. India has been Bangladesh's most steadfast friend and partner for decades. The ties between our nations are deep and fundamental.

RUSSIAN GENERAL KILLED IN CAR BOMB BLAST IN MOSCOW, UKRAINE'S INVOLVEMENT SUSPECTED

Diary Times Desk : A Russian general was killed on Monday morning after an explosive device detonated underneath his car in southern Moscow, investigators said.

Lieutenant General Fanil Sarvarov, head of the Operational Training Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff, died from his injuries, Svetlana Petrenko, official spokesperson for Russia's Investigative Committee, said.

"Investigators are pursuing numerous lines of enquiry regarding the murder. One of these is that the crime was orchestrated by Ukrainian intelligence services," Petrenko said.

AFTER HADI, ANOTHER BANGLADESH STUDENT LEADER SHOT IN HEAD

Diary Times Desk : Unidentified gunmen on Monday shot in the head Motaleb Shikder, a second leader of Bangladesh's violent student-led 2024 uprising. The attack took place in southwestern Khulna city, days after the killing of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi.

"The Khulna Division head of NCP (National Citizen Party) and central coordinator of the party's workers front, Motaleb Shikder, was shot a few minutes ago," NCP's joint principal coordinator Mahmuda Mitu said in a Facebook post. Mitu, a doctor, said Shikder was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital in a critical condition. The Kaler Kantha newspaper, quoting hospital sources, said Shikder was shot on the left side of his head, and he was bleeding profusely when he was brought to the facility, where the doctors started emergency treatment. The attack came days after Hadi, a prominent leader of the student-led protests last year that led to the ouster of the prime minister Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, was shot in the head on December 12 by masked gunmen at an election campaign in central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area.

WATCH AS MEXICO TOWN MAYOR'S INAUGURATION TRAIN LEAVES HIM BEHIND

Diary Times Desk : When the brand-new Line 4 light-rail rolled out of the station on schedule, Tlajomulco mayor Quirino Velázquez was still on the platform — and the Internet exploded.

The Line 4 project, launched after three years of construction (May 2022-2025), is billed as a game-changer for the southern part of Guadalajara, promising 1,16,000 daily passengers and cutting commute times in half. On the day of the ceremony, Velázquez arrived late and never made it onto the first official train. Instead of delaying the departure for protocol, officials let the train leave as planned and the inauguration continued without a hitch. The clip quickly flooded social media. Many users praised the decision to keep the schedule, calling it "refreshing punctuality" and "respect for public infrastructure". Others turned the mishap into jokes, comparing it to countries where VIPs routinely hold up trains and public events. The mayor himself later posted the video on his accounts with a light-hearted message: "Don't worry, folks, the next one's just 9 minutes away." His calm reaction helped turn the blunder into a showcase of humility and citizen-first attitude.

SUSPECTED GUNMAN IN SYDNEY BEACH SHOOTING TRAINED WITH FATHER, ALLEGES POLICE

Diary Times Desk : A man accused of killing 15 people at Sydney's Bondi Beach conducted firearms training in an area of New South Wales state outside of Sydney with his father, Australian police documents released on Monday allege. The men recorded a video about their justification for the meticulously planned attack, according to a police statement of facts that was made public following Naveed Akram's video court appearance on Monday from a Sydney hospital where he has been treated for an abdominal injury. Officers wounded Akram at the scene of the December 14 shooting and killed his father, 50-year-old Sajid Akram. The New South Wales state government confirmed that Naveed Akram was transferred on Monday from a hospital to a prison. Neither facility was identified by authorities. The statement alleges that the 24-year-old and his father began their attack by throwing four improvised explosive devices towards a crowd celebrating an annual Jewish event at Bondi Beach, but the devices failed to explode. Police described the devices as three aluminium pipe bombs and a tennis ball bomb containing an explosive, black powder and steel ball bearings. None detonated, but police described them as "viable" IEDs.



ANGER SPILLS ONTO STREETS IN INDIA, BANGLADESH AS PROTESTS ERUPT OVER LYNCHING OF HINDU YOUTH DIPU CHANDRA DAS

Diary Times Desk : Kolkata on Monday witnessed a wave of protesters surrounding the High Commission of Bangladesh there, expressing intense anger over the mob lynching and burning of the Hindu youth, Dipu Chandra Das, in Bangladesh's Mymensingh district. Led by BJP leader and Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly Suvenu Adhikari, along with other party leaders and supporters, demonstrators staged their protest in front of the High Commission, condemning the killing and demanding accountability from the Bangladeshi authorities. Speaking during the protest, Adhikari stated that Dipu Das was brutally killed and warned of intensified agitation, noting that the incident had deeply angered the Hindu community. He further announced a one-hour border blockade on December 24 in protest of the murder, and that another demonstration will take place outside the Bangladesh High Commission on December 26. "Dipu Das was burnt alive. We will not allow them to sit here (Bangladesh High Commission). They will have to lock this up. The whole Hindu community will not spare them," Adhikari said. "On 24th December, there will be a one-hour blockade at the border and on 26th December, we will protest here again," he added. The protests came in the backdrop of a mob lynching of the Hindu youth, Dipu Chandra Das, a worker in a garment factory, in Bangladesh's Mymensingh district. According to reports, Dipu Das, who was beaten to death by a mob over alleged blasphemy charges, had his body hanged and set on fire on December 18.



EXERCISE DESERT CYCLONE-II PROGRESSES WITH INTENSIVE JOINT URBAN OPERATIONS TRAINING AT AL-HAMRA

Diary Times Desk : Exercise Desert Cyclone-II is progressing with intensive joint training at Al-Hamra, with troops from the Indian Army and the UAE Land Forces undertaking a rigorous mix of classroom instruction and field-based modules. The ongoing training focuses on core urban combat fundamentals, including the marking and clearing of buildings, IED awareness, casualty evacuation, first aid and structured mission planning, aimed at enhancing interoperability and developing common operating procedures in built-up areas, the statement by the Indian Army said. The statement noted that as the exercise advances, troops are executing progressive practical drills in urban terrain, covering room intervention, building clearance and platoon-level joint assault exercises.

TIBETAN NGOS PROTEST ALLEGED ILLEGAL CHINESE GOLD MINING IN TIBET, DEMAND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

Diary Times Desk : Australia is observing a National Day of ReflectiA group of five NGOs, including the Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association, National Democratic Party of Tibet, Gu Chu Sum Movement Association of Tibet, and Students for a Free Tibet India, vehemently denounced China's unlawful gold mining activities in Kashi village, Kham Zachuka, during a photo demonstration at McLeod Ganj's Main Square in Dharamshala on Friday morning, as reported by Phayul. The Chinese government initiated an unauthorised gold mining operation in Kashi village, Kham Zachuka, Sershul County, in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture on November 5, without gaining consent from the local Tibetan residents.

EAM JAISHANKAR LANDS IN COLOMBO; SET TO MEET SRI LANKAN LEADERSHIP TOMORROW

Diary Times Desk : External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday evening landed in Colombo and was received by Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ruwan Ranasinghe, upon arrival in the country. His visit comes amid ongoing relief efforts under Operation Sagar Bandhu, launched to assist Sri Lanka after the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah. In a post on X, EAM said that he would meet Sri Lankan leadership on Tuesday. "Landed in Colombo this evening. Thank Deputy @TourismMin Ruwan Ranasinghe for the warm reception. Look forward to my meetings with Sri Lankan leadership tomorrow." The Ministry of External Affairs said the visit highlights India's Neighbourhood First Policy and comes amid ongoing relief efforts under Operation Sagar Bandhu, launched to assist Sri Lanka after the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah. Jaishankar's engagements are expected to strengthen ties between the two countries further, as India continues to coordinate humanitarian assistance and reinforce bilateral cooperation as Sri Lanka recovers from the cyclone's impact.



16 KILLED AS PASSENGER BUS CRASHES IN INDONESIA

Diary Times Desk : At least 16 people were killed when a passenger bus crashed on Indonesia's main island of Java just after midnight on Monday, officials said. The bus carrying 34 people, lost control on a toll road, struck a concrete barrier and overturned, according to Budiono, a chief of Indonesia's search and rescue agency. The inter-province bus was travelling from the capital Jakarta to the ancient royal city of Yogyakarta when it overturned while entering a curved exit ramp at the Krapyak toll way in Central Java's Semarang city, Budiono said. "The forceful impact threw several passengers from their seats and left them trapped against the bus body," he said. Police and rescue teams arrived at the accident site about 40 minutes after the crash and recovered the bodies of six passengers who died on the spot. Another 10 victims died on the way to a hospital or while being treated, Budiono added. The 18 victims being treated at two nearby hospitals included five people in critical condition and 13 in serious condition, he said.

JAPAN'S NEW FLAGSHIP H3 ROCKET FAILS TO PUT GEOLOCATION SATELLITE INTO ORBIT

Diary Times Desk : Japan's space agency said on Monday that its H3 rocket, carrying a navigation satellite, failed to place the payload into its planned orbit, dealing a setback to the country's new flagship launcher and its space programme. The failure marks the second major setback for the H3 rocket, following its botched debut flight in 2023, after which it had notched up six successful launches.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said the H3 rocket carrying the Michibiki 5 satellite lifted off from the Tanegashima Space Center on a southwestern Japanese island as part of Japan's plan to build a more precise, home-grown positioning system. However, the rocket's second-stage engine burn unexpectedly cut off prematurely, and the subsequent separation of the satellite from the rocket could not be confirmed, launch director and JAXA executive Masashi Okada told a news conference.

Whether the satellite was released into space or where it eventually ended up remains unknown. Okada said JAXA is analysing the data to determine the cause of the failure and other details. Jun Kondo, an official at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, said the failure was "extremely regrettable" and that the government had set up a task force to investigate the cause and take necessary measures as soon as possible to "regain credibility".

NATIONAL CITIZEN PARTY-AFFILIATED LEADER MOTALEB SHIKDAR "OUT OF DANGER" AFTER BEING SHOT IN BANGLADESH'S KHULNA

Diary Times Desk : The National Citizen Party (NCP)-affiliated Jatiya Sramik Shakti leader Motaleb Shikdar, who was earlier shot in the head in broad daylight on Monday in Bangladesh's Khulna, is now out of danger, according to officials, bdnews245 reported. According to bdnews24, citing Khulna Medical College Hospital Superintendent Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman, Motaleb, who is the Khulna divisional leader of the Jatiya Sramik Shakti, suffered a gunshot wound to the left side of his head and is now out of danger.

"Motaleb is out of danger now. He received primary treatment in the dressing room of the hospital's surgery ward," Akhtaruzzaman said, as quoted by bdnews24.

Sonadanga Police Station Inspector Animesh Mandal said the incident occurred around noon in Khulna's Sonadanga area. Motaleb was shot inside a house located behind Gazi Medical College Hospital and the bullet only skimmed his scalp, causing bleeding, but he survived, the police added.



RUSSIAN MILITARY GENERAL KILLED IN TARGETED BLAST IN MOSCOW

Diary Times Desk : A senior Russian military officer was killed in a car bomb explosion in Moscow on Monday, with investigators confirming that the blast was caused by an explosive device planted beneath the vehicle, RT reported. According to Russia's Investigative Committee, the explosion took place earlier in the day in the southern part of the city, damaging several vehicles in the area.

Initial media reports said the driver was seriously injured, before officials later identified the victim as Lieutenant General Fanil Sarvarov, head of operational training at the General Staff. Investigators said the explosive device had been deliberately placed under the car, indicating a targeted attack.

In this context, Russian authorities said one possible line of inquiry is an assassination linked to Ukrainian intelligence services, RT reported.

AT LEAST 16 KILLED AS SPEEDING BUS OVERTURNS ON HIGHWAY IN INDONESIA'S JAVA

Diary Times Desk : At least 16 people were killed after a passenger bus crashed into a roadside barrier and overturned on a highway in Indonesia's Central Java province early Monday, Jakarta Post reported. The bus was travelling from Jakarta to Yogyakarta when the accident occurred at a highway interchange in Krupyak, near the city of Semarang. According to search and rescue authorities, the bus was moving at a fairly high speed when it approached a turn, lost control and struck the barrier before flipping onto its side. Rescue teams evacuated 34 people from the scene. Fifteen passengers were declared dead on the spot, while another succumbed to injuries after being taken to the hospital. Several others were rushed to medical facilities in Semarang for treatment. Video footage released by rescue officials showed emergency workers carrying bodies away as the damaged bus lay overturned.

UAE MARKS 2025 WITH STRATEGIC AI TRANSFORMATION, INFRASTRUCTURE LEADERSHIP



Diary Times Desk : The United Arab Emirates solidified its position as a global digital infrastructure hub in 2025, recording a world-leading 97 per cent utilisation rate of artificial intelligence tools across government entities, while the number of programmers in the country exceeded 450,000. The year was defined by high-stakes international partnerships, most notably the establishment of a 5-gigawatt UAE-US AI Campus in Abu Dhabi. Serving billions of users through a mix of nuclear, solar, and gas power, the site represents the largest supercomputing cluster outside the United States.

This was complemented by the launch of the "Stargate UAE" project, a 1-gigawatt initiative involving G42, OpenAI, Oracle, Cisco, SoftBank, and Nvidia. Utilising advanced NVIDIA Grace Blackwell GB300 systems, the project's first phase is slated for 2026. Strategic cooperation also expanded to Europe through a UAE-France AI framework, which includes a dedicated 1-gigawatt data centre alongside joint projects in renewable energy, advanced semiconductors and shared research platforms. On the investment front, UAE-based MGX has joined BlackRock, Global Infrastructure Partners, Microsoft, Nvidia, and xAI in an "AI Infrastructure Partnership" targeting next-generation data centres and energy solutions, with potential investments reaching \$100 billion.

EAST TURKISTAN GOVT IN EXILE REJECTS 'HISTORICAL FALSIFICATION,' CONDEMNS GLORIFICATION OF ALLEGED COLLABORATORS

Diary Times Desk : The East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE) has issued a strong condemnation against what it described as deliberate attempts to equate alleged collaborators of the Chinese occupation regime with leaders who genuinely struggled for East Turkistan's independence and sovereignty. In a statement posted on X, the ETGE said such narratives amount to "historical falsification and political sabotage", aimed at weakening the East Turkistan national liberation movement. The group asserted that conflating collaboration with resistance undermines decades of sacrifices made by those who fought and died for full independence. The ETGE specifically rejected claims portraying Isa Yusuf Alptekin as a leader of East Turkistan's independence struggle. According to the statement, Alptekin opposed both the First East Turkistan Republic (1933-34) and the Second East Turkistan Republic (1944-49) and instead served the interests of Chinese authorities. The exile government alleged that he promoted the concepts of "autonomy" and "cultural rights" under Chinese rule as a substitute for complete independence, a move it described as collaboration with occupying forces.

US HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE UNVEILS 'TEN MORE FOR TAIWAN' REPORT TO BOLSTER DETERRENCE AGAINST CHINA

Diary Times Desk : The bipartisan US House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has released a new report titled "Ten More for Taiwan", outlining urgent steps to strengthen deterrence against potential Chinese aggression toward Taiwan and to preserve peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Released jointly by Committee Chairman John Moolenaar and Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi, the report builds on the committee's earlier "Ten for Taiwan" framework, which identified deterring CCP military action against Taiwan as central to the committee's mandate. The latest document warns that developments driven by Beijing since the initial report have significantly increased the risk of conflict, making immediate and comprehensive action necessary. The report underscores that the United States' primary objective is to prevent war, stressing that effective deterrence will require the urgent use of all elements of national power, including military.

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND FTA PUTS PARTNERSHIP ON ACCELERATED GROWTH TRAJECTORY: S JAISHANKAR



Diary Times Desk : External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday described the newly concluded India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as a landmark step that will significantly boost trade, investment and economic collaboration between the two countries. In a post on X, Jaishankar said the agreement marked a new phase in bilateral ties. "A landmark in India-New Zealand ties. The India-NZ FTA, concluded in record time under the guidance of PM Narendra Modi and PM Christopher Luxon, places our partnership on an accelerated growth trajectory. It will surely boost trade, investment and economic collaboration across sectors," he wrote. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Christopher Luxon, as the two leaders jointly announced a landmark India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. The leaders agreed that the FTA would serve as a catalyst for greater trade, investment, innovation and shared opportunities between both countries. In an X post PM Modi wrote, "My friend PM Christopher Luxon and I had a very good conversation a short while ago following the conclusion of the landmark India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement."

TRUMP APPOINTS LOUISIANA GOVERNOR JEFF LANDRY AS SPECIAL ENVOY TO GREENLAND

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump has announced the appointment of Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry as special envoy to Greenland, signalling renewed attention to the strategically significant Arctic territory. Announcing the decision in a social media post, Trump said the Louisiana Republican "understands how essential Greenland is to our National Security, and will strongly advance our Country's Interests for the Safety, Security, and Survival of our Allies, and indeed, the World." The appointment comes against the backdrop of Trump's long-standing interest in Greenland, which he first publicly expressed during his first term when he floated the idea of purchasing the island from Denmark. Greenland, located between Europe and the United States, has long been viewed as strategically important for US security, particularly in relation to deterring a potential attack from Russia, and is also rich in rare earth minerals.

US PURSUES SANCTIONED OIL TANKER NEAR VENEZUELA AFTER VESSEL REFUSES TO STOP

Diary Times Desk : The United States on Sunday (local time) began pursuing what it described as a "dark fleet" vessel in international waters near Venezuela after the ship refused to stop and continued sailing, CNN reported. The vessel, identified as Bella 1, was sailing toward Venezuela to load oil when US Coast Guard personnel attempted to board it. CNN reported that, instead of complying, the vessel continued sailing, prompting officials to launch an active pursuit. According to US authorities, Bella 1 is under American sanctions for links to Iranian oil and is viewed as part of a "shadow fleet" used to transport crude from sanctioned countries. A judicial warrant had already been issued for the vessel's seizure. "The United States Coast Guard is in active pursuit of a sanctioned dark fleet vessel that is part of Venezuela's illegal sanctions evasion," a second US official said.

JAPAN PM TAKAICHI'S CABINET APPROVAL RATING FALLS TO 67.5 PER CENT AMID TAIWAN REMARKS

Diary Times Desk : The approval rating of the Cabinet led by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has slipped to 67.5 per cent, with a majority of respondents saying her remarks on a Taiwan contingency, which have strained relations with China, could negatively affect Japan's economy, according to a Kyodo News survey.

The survey showed that concerns persist over Takaichi's comments on Taiwan, even as public opinion remains divided on whether her remarks were inappropriate.

While 57.0 per cent of respondents said they did not view her statements as careless, 37.6 per cent said they were, especially when compared with past prime ministers who avoided direct comments on the sensitive Taiwan issue, Kyodo News reported.

Sino-Japanese relations have worsened since Takaichi stated in parliament on November 7 that an attack on Taiwan, which China claims as its territory, could amount to a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan.

The remark was widely seen as implying the possible involvement of Japan's Self-Defense Forces in support of the United States under the country's right to collective self-defense. The two-day telephone poll, conducted from Saturday, found that the Cabinet's approval rating declined by 2.4 percentage points from the previous month's survey.



CHINA TO OFFICIALLY LAUNCH ONLINE VISA APPLICATION SYSTEM IN INDIA TODAY

Diary Times Desk : The Chinese Embassy in India will officially launch the China Online Visa Application System, a move aimed at simplifying and streamlining the visa application process for Indian travellers, from Monday.

The announcement was shared by the Chinese Ambassador to India earlier in a post confirming that, from December 22, 2025, applicants can complete visa application forms and upload required documents online. The new system allows users to access the service through the official website, visaforchina.cn/DEL3_EN/qianzh, offering greater convenience and efficiency.

With the launch of the online platform, applicants are expected to save time during the initial stages of visa processing, as much of the documentation can now be submitted digitally. The Chinese Visa Application Service Centre in New Delhi will continue to assist applicants alongside the online system. The centre operates from Monday to Friday, between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. It is located on the Concourse Floor of Shivaji Stadium Metro Station, Baba Kharak Singh Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi. Applicants can also reach the centre by phone at +91-9999036735. The information was shared by the envoy on his post on X, too.

SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR LEADS 12.1 MILLION PEOPLE FROM 150 COUNTRIES FOR WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTIVE MEDITATION

Diary Times Desk : In what experts described as a defining moment for global wellbeing, more than 12.1 million people from 150 countries participated in what was billed as the largest collective meditation in history, led by India's spiritual leader Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, on World Meditation Day. World Meditation Day was formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2024 as an annual observance to underline the role of meditation in mental wellbeing and social harmony. This year's observance was anchored at the United Nations Trusteeship Council in New York, where diplomats and senior officials joined the live meditation led by Gurudev, while millions more participated across continents. From Indian cities and villages to communities in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas and Australia, the meditation connected people.

RUPEE FALLS 3 PAISE TO CLOSE AT 89.70 AGAINST US DOLLAR

Diary Times Desk : The rupee pared its initial gains and settled in negative territory on Monday, slipping 3 paise to close at 89.70 (provisional) against the US dollar, as support from positive domestic equities was offset by a recovery in crude oil prices. Forex traders said a lack of progress in US-India trade negotiations weighed on market sentiment, while weakness in the US dollar index helped limit losses for the domestic currency at lower levels. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 89.53 against the US dollar and touched an intra-day high of 89.45, registering a gain of 22 paise from its previous close. However, it reversed course later in the session to end at 89.70 (provisional), down 3 paise on the day. On Friday, the rupee had appreciated by 53 paise to settle at 89.67 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias on a weak US dollar and strength in domestic markets. We may not see significant fresh FII outflows ahead of the New Year holidays. However, delays in a trade deal between India and the US may continue to weigh on the rupee at higher levels," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND FTA TO OPEN NEW GATEWAYS TO PROSPERITY, NEW MILESTONE IN MODI GOVT: AMIT SHAH

Diary Times Desk : The India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will open new gateways to prosperity setting up a new milestone in the Narendra Modi government, said Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday. Taking it to social media platform X, Shah said, "Modi govt's trade diplomacy sets new milestone. India-New Zealand FTA, that brings in USD 20 billion investment and offers lucrative opportunities for Indian innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students, and youth, will open new gateways to prosperity." "It is a textbook example of how, people-centric foreign policy is fulfilling the aspirations of citizens under PM Narendra Modi Ji's leadership," he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday held a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of New Zealand Christopher Luxon as the two leaders jointly announced a landmark India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.

GOLD JUMPS TO RECORD HIGH OF RS 1.38 LAKH/10G, SILVER HITS NEW PEAK OF RS 2,14,500 PER KG

Diary Times Desk : Gold prices rose to a fresh lifetime high of Rs 1,38,200 per 10 grams, gaining Rs 1,685, in the national capital on Monday following the precious metal scaling record highs in the global markets, according to the All India Saraf Association. Silver prices also raced to hit an all-time high of Rs 2,14,500 per kilogramme (inclusive of all taxes) in the capital, up by Rs 10,400 per kg. "Bullish momentum extended in bullion, with gold and silver surging to another fresh record high on Monday," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst-Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold increased by \$80.85, or 1.86 per cent, to hit a record of \$4,420.35 per ounce. "Investor interest in silver and gold has grown considerably as interest rates are going down in the US, fiscal concerns are growing, and the American economy is becoming more uncertain," Gandhi said. He added that this has led to a shift towards the safe-haven asset. In addition, the demand for safe haven also increased, due to the escalating geopolitical tensions. Spot silver appreciated by \$2.31, or 3.44 per cent, to hit a lifetime high of \$69.45 per ounce in the overseas markets. "Silver prices have reached a record high, reflecting strong industrial demand along with rising investment demand," Satish Dondapati, Fund Manager at Kotak Mutual Fund, said.



INDIA IN ADVANCE STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR TRADE PACT WITH US: PIYUSH GOYAL

Diary Times Desk : India is at an advanced stage of negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement with the US, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. US Deputy Trade Representative Rick Switzer was recently here with his team to take stock of these talks. The two-day talks concluded on December 11. "We are already at an advanced stage in our discussions with the US," Goyal said here while talking to the media about the conclusion of negotiations for the India-New Zealand free trade agreement. He also said that India has so far finalised FTAs with three members of the Five Eyes (FVEY) alliance - Australia, UK and New Zealand. The five countries of the intelligence sharing network are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the US. India is also in the process of resuming talks for a trade agreement with Canada. "We are soon going to launch discussions for the ToR (terms of reference) with Canada also," Goyal said adding "this reflects the growing strategic importance of India in world geopolitics". The India-US trade pact talks are crucial as both the countries are working to finalise the first tranche of the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).



SENSEX RALLIES 638 PTS, NIFTY SETTLES ABOVE 26,000 ON FOREIGN FUND INFLOWS, FIRM GLOBAL TRENDS

Diary Times Desk : Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 1 per cent on Monday as investor sentiment remained positive amid foreign fund inflows and a rally in global markets on expectations of further monetary policy easing by the US Federal Reserve. Building on the previous session's rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 638.12 points or 0.75 per cent to settle at 85,567.48. During the day, it surged 671.97 points or 0.79 per cent to 85,601.33. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 206 points or 0.79 per cent to close above the 26,000 mark at 26,172.40. From the 30-Sensex firms, Trent, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra, Bharat Electronics and Maruti were among the biggest gainers. However, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Larsen & Toubro and Titan were the laggards. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi jumped over 2 per cent, while Japan's Nikkei 225 index climbed nearly 2 per cent. Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index also settled in positive territory. European markets were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended higher on Friday. "Indian markets extended their year-end rally, supported by strong liquidity and global cues, as expectations of further Fed easing in 2026 continue to underpin growth. FIs turned net buyers, reinforcing the positive tone, with IT and metals leading gains," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.



TSMC RECORDS HIGHEST SHAREHOLDER NUMBERS SINCE APRIL DESPITE SHARE PRICE DROP

Diary Times Desk : Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) recorded its highest number of shareholders in nearly eight months this week, even as its share price dropped. The number of people owning shares in the company rose to 1.88 million as of Friday. This is the highest level seen since April 25. The total count increased by 31,870 people compared to the previous week, according to a report by Focus Taiwan. The increase in shareholders happened despite a 3.38 per cent fall in the company's stock price. Shares fell by NT\$1,430.00 (USD 45.39). This price drop occurred because many investors decided to sell their shares to collect profits. This selling followed a period of ups and downs for technology stocks in the United States. Because of this price decline, the total market value of TSMC fell by NT\$1.29 trillion (USD 41.02 billion) in a single week. Data from the Taiwan Stock Exchange showed that the cheaper stock price encouraged small investors to buy more.

INDIA'S CORE SECTOR GROWS AT 1.8% IN NOV; CEMENT, STEEL, FERTILISER AND COAL IN POSITIVE TERRITORY

Diary Times Desk : The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 1.8% in November as compared to the same period last year, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on Monday. The production of cement, steel, fertiliser and coal recorded positive growth in November 2025, it said. Coal production rose by 2.1% in November. However, on a cumulative basis, coal output declined by 1.4% during the April-November 2025-26 period. Crude oil production recorded a contraction of 3.2% in November compared to the year-ago period. The cumulative crude oil index has declined by 1.3% in the current financial year so far. Natural gas output fell by 2.5% year-on-year in November 2025, continuing its downward trend. Cumulatively, natural gas production declined by 3% during April-November 2025-26. Petroleum refinery products, the largest component of the core industries index saw a decline of 0.9% in November. Despite a monthly decline, refinery output posted marginal cumulative growth of 0.2% during the period under review.

LOANS AGAINST GOLD JEWELLERY RECORDED TRIPLE-DIGIT GROWTH RATES SINCE FEBRUARY 2025: RBI BULLETIN

Diary Times Desk : Bank credit data show that loans against gold jewellery have been recording triple-digit growth rates since February 2025, far outpacing overall credit expansion, according to the Reserve Bank of India's State of the Economy report for December 2025. While gold loans still account for a relatively small share of total non-food credit, their proportion has nearly doubled over the past year, indicating a rapid change in borrowing preferences, it said. As per the recent RBI data, the loans against gold jewellery have become the unlikely star of retail credit with outstanding balances in this category surging 128.5% year-on-year to Rs 3.38 lakh crore in October 2025. A sharp rise in gold-backed lending in recent months points to a significant shift in household financial behaviour, as families increasingly tap into idle gold assets to meet consumption and liquidity needs amid evolving economic conditions, it said. Economists in the article attribute the surge to a combination of high gold prices, softer interest rates, and easy accessibility of gold-backed credit compared with unsecured personal loans. With gold prices at elevated levels, households are able to unlock higher loan values against the same quantity of jewellery, making gold loans an attractive short-term financing option.



RESURGENCE IN JOB DEMAND IN IT SECTOR WITH 16% INCREASE IN 2025, GCCS MARK STRONGEST GROWTH: REPORT



Diary Times Desk : India's IT (Information Technology) hiring has seen resurgence in 2025 with 1.8 million job demand, registering a 16% rise over 2024 and reflecting renewed tech investment, said a report by Queso Corp. The report highlighted that the mid-level professionals (4-10 years) form 65% of 2025 demand, up from 50% in 2024. Entry-level hiring has shrunk to 15% as firms prioritize productivity-ready talent. Leadership and expert roles, though small in volume, are growing steadily.

In terms of geographical concentration, the report said 88-90% of IT hiring remains concentrated in Tier-1 metros while Tier-2/3 cities account for 10-12%, with marginal gains during the 2024 slowdown, it said.

"Ahmedabad, Kochi, Jaipur, and Coimbatore are leading secondary hubs." Since 2024, the demand for AI/ML, cloud, and cybersecurity has risen 30-42%. These far outpace core development, which grows modestly. Legacy skills now make up less than 10% of demand and continue to decline, the report said. Another key highlight of the report was that the Global Capability Centers (GCCs) have increased share of demand from around 15% in 2024 to approximately 27% in 2025, marking the strongest growth among all segments as global enterprises expand innovation and engineering centers in India.

Among the largest centers, 77 hubs operate within the 5,000-20,000 employee range, forming the backbone of India's advanced engineering ecosystem, the report said. Product and SaaS organizations have grown by about 15% since 2024, supported by renewed investments in AI, cloud and digital platforms. Startup hiring shows a 10-20% decline from 2023-24 levels due to funding moderation and more selective scaling. "Late 2025 indicates early signs of improvement, particularly among AI-first and fintech models, although the segment remains a smaller share of overall demand," the report said.

Diary Times Desk : would expect a mad rush among eligible candidates to head the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA), the richest and the most influential sports body of the state. However, not a single nomination was filed for the post of president in the HPCA elections held in Dharamsala on Saturday. The other office-bearers were chosen unanimously – Vijay Kumar as vice-president, Manuj Sharma as secretary, Vishal Sharma as joint secretary and Vikram Singh as treasurer. “No one filed a nomination for the post of the president,” said Avnish Parmar, the outgoing secretary of the association. “As there’s no president, the vice-president will be the acting president until the new president is elected,” said Parmar. He further said that the office-bearers had been chosen for a period of three years, and the president could be elected anytime during this period. “The current body, as per the directions of Lodha committee, will resume the process to elect the president as soon as possible,” said Parmar.

HOLIDAY SEASON APPROACHING FAST, TOURISTS START RUSHING TO SHIMLA

Diary Times Desk : With holiday season fast approaching, tourists from across the country have started to make a beeline for Shimla, one of the most popular tourist destinations of the country. Tourists from Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and other parts of the state visited the popular hill station during this weekend, bringing cheers to the hoteliers and traders in the town. On Sunday, thousands of people were seen taking a stroll on the iconic Ridge and The Mall along with several other prominent tourist spots in the town and its adjoining areas. People were also seen visiting the iconic Christ Church as well as Lord Hanuman Temple at Jakhu. Deepak Chawla, a tourist from Delhi who visited the town with his family, said that they had been planning to come to Shimla for the past few months and decided to visit the town this weekend. He said that while they are enjoying their holidays, they were a little disappointed as they wanted to experience snowfall. Kiran Sharma, another tourist from Punjab, said that she has come to Shimla.

DOCTOR ACCUSED OF ASSAULTING PATIENT AT IGMC IN SHIMLA, SPARKS PROTEST

Diary Times Desk : A patient was allegedly assaulted by a doctor at Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC), Shimla, on Sunday, triggering protests by the patient’s attendants outside the hospital premises. According to the attendants, a video of the alleged assault was recorded and has since gone viral on social media. The patient, who hails from a village in the Kupvi subdivision of Shimla district, said he had visited the hospital after experiencing breathing problems. “When the doctor arrived, he spoke to me rudely. When I requested him to speak respectfully, he started beating me,” the patient alleged. Following the incident, the patient’s attendants raised slogans outside the hospital, demanding the suspension of the accused doctor. The hospital authorities have not yet issued any official statement regarding the incident.

HIMACHAL TO RECEIVE SNOWFALL AND RAIN ON DECEMBER 28

Diary Times Desk : The higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh are expected to receive snow and rainfall on December 28. As per the State’s Meteorological Department, light snowfall and rainfall is will occur in isolated places of Kullu, Kinnaur, Chamba and Lahaul and Spiti districts, while weather in the rest of the districts will remain dry. However, there will be no large change in minimum and maximum temperatures across the state for the next few days. A yellow warning for dense fog has been issued for parts of the Balh valley in Mandi and the reservoir area of the Bhakra dam in Bilaspur. The fog is expected to affect visibility during early morning hours until December 26. Meanwhile, the weather was mostly dry across the state during the past 24 hours with several places in the higher reaches witnessing light precipitation. Minimum temperatures in most of the places in the state were 3°C to 6°C above normal and were in the range of -3°C to 11°C while maximum temperatures were 2°C to 3°C below normal in higher hills and were normal in rest of the state, ranging between 12°C to 25°C. Shimla, the state’s capital recorded 9.8°C minimum temperature while Dharamsala recorded 9.6°C. Minimum temperature in Manali and Una was 6.6°C each, Kangra 8°C, Mandi 6.7°C, Solan 7°C.



ADVANCED PAEDIATRIC CENTRE TO BE SET UP AT CHAMIYANA HOSPITAL: HIMACHAL CM

Diary Times Desk : Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today launched the state-level Intensified Pulse Polio Campaign at Kamla Nehru Hospital, Shimla, on the occasion of National Immunisation Day. Nearly six lakh children up to the age of five years would be given polio drops at 5,793 polio booths across the state. A total of 11,706 vaccination teams have been deployed for the smooth conduct of the campaign. The mop-up days would be observed December 22-23, during which door-to-door visits will be carried out to cover missed children, migrant families and high-risk areas. All required vaccines, cold-chain equipment and other logistics have already been supplied to all districts. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said the state government was strengthening health services from primary health centres to medical colleges. He announced that an Advanced Paediatric Centre would be established at the Atal Institute of Medical Super Specialties, Chamiyana. “The centre would provide world-class treatment facilities to children,” he said. He further said that special OPD consultation slots would be introduced in hospitals for senior citizens above 70 years of age so that they do not have to wait and can receive timely.



YOUR HOROSCOPE

23-12-2025



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 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.

VETERAN MUSICIAN USTAD PURAN SHAH KOTI PASSES AWAY AT 72

Diary Times Desk : Revered musician and teacher Ustad Puran Shah Koti passed away at 72 on Monday morning after a prolonged illness. He had been unwell for the past few months. Ustad Puran Shah Koti will be remembered as a towering personality with an extraordinary intellect and a deep understanding of life and culture. Known for his vast knowledge across subjects such as society, politics, music, and literature, he was admired for being constantly updated and intellectually engaged with the world around him. He mentored several prominent artists, including Hans Raj Hans, Jasbir Jassi, and Sabarkoti. Recalling his association with the late maestro, Deepak Bali, Advisor, Culture and Tourism to the Government of Punjab, shared that he first met Koti in 1993. Bali described him as a rare combination of a great teacher and an exceptional presenter. "His personality was deeply impactful, and his intellect was remarkably high. He could speak effortlessly on any subject, be it society, politics, music, or literature," Bali said. He added that while many great teachers may not always be strong presenters, Ustad Puran Shah Koti stood out for his ability to communicate and connect with audiences. Bali also recalled hearing him sing live, noting that his voice and music had the power to bring deep joy.

'WALKING SINGH' TRAVELS 710 KM TO RAISE AWARENESS ON MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN UK

Diary Times Desk : Indian-born Gurmeet Singh Sidhu, who won the Movember UK and Europe Award 2025 in the "Going the Distance" category after travelling 508 km, has now completed a 710 km walking challenge to raise awareness for men's mental health and suicide prevention. Hailing from Bir Behman, Bathinda, Sidhu – known as Walking Singh – is an alumnus of The Punjab Public School, Nabha. A teacher at Gravesend Grammar School, he told The Tribune that his original target was 600 km – symbolising the 60 men who die by suicide every hour worldwide, one every minute. "I pushed past 710 km, raising nearly £3,000 for the Movember charity," he said. Sidhu said men face serious mental health issues because they often don't open up and keep their emotions.

PUNJAB EX-IPS OFFICER AMAR SINGH CHAHAL, ACCUSED IN 2015 FARIDKOT FIRING CASE, CRITICAL AFTER ALLEGED 'SUICIDE' ATTEMPT

Diary Times Desk : Former IPS officer Amar Singh Chahal is in critical condition after an alleged suicide attempt reported on Monday, police said. He was rushed to Park Hospital with a serious chest injury and is undergoing treatment. Doctors have not yet declared him dead. Police officials said a note recovered from the scene reportedly refers to financial distress allegedly caused by an online fraud. An investigation has been initiated to ascertain the exact circumstances of the incident. Patiala SSP Varun Sharma said police teams immediately reached Chahal's residence after receiving information about the incident. "As soon as we received information of bullet fired, our teams rushed to his house and he was rushed to the hospital in a very critical condition", confirmed Patiala SSP Varun Sharma. Chahal was one of the accused in the 2015 Faridkot firing case. In February 2023, a Punjab Police Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by ADGP LK Yadav filed a chargesheet in a Faridkot court naming several political leaders and senior police officers, including Chahal. Police said more details are expected once the investigation is completed.



CONVICT ESCAPES GALLOWS AS HC COMMUTES DEATH SENTENCE TO LIFE WITH 20-YEAR MINIMUM

Diary Times Desk : Making it clear that not every brutal murder warrants capital punishment, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has commuted the death sentence of Ashok Kumar – convicted of murdering and beheading his own brother over a property dispute – to life imprisonment, with a stipulation that he shall not be released unless he completes 20 years of actual incarceration. Upholding the conviction for murder and causing disappearance of evidence, the Division Bench of Justice Anoop Chitkara and Justice HS Grewal made it clear that the case did not fall within the rarest of rare category justifying the death penalty. "The mitigating factors that would not justify the imposition of a capital sentence are that the motive for killing his brother was a property dispute, and it was the convict's personal revenge, not social revenge," the Bench held, adding that there was also no material to show that the convict would be a menace to society. At the same time, the court left no doubt about Ashok's guilt. On an appraisal of the circumstantial evidence, it concluded: "It is established beyond a reasonable doubt that appellant Ashok had murdered his brother and, after that, had carried away the severed head, leaving behind the decapitated body."

COLD WEATHER PERSISTS IN PUNJAB, HARYANA; TEMPERATURES STAY ABOVE NORMAL

Diary Times Desk : Punjab and Haryana remained under the influence of a cold spell on Monday, even as minimum temperatures in several parts of both states hovered a few notches above the seasonal average. According to the local meteorological department, Amritsar in Punjab recorded a minimum temperature of 9.7 degrees Celsius, six notches above normal, while Ludhiana registered a low of 7.2 degrees Celsius, one notch above average. Other cities in Punjab also experienced cold conditions. Patiala recorded a minimum of 9.4 degrees Celsius, three degrees above normal, while Pathankot logged a low of 9 degrees Celsius. Bathinda, Faridkot and Gurdaspur recorded minimum temperatures of 9.8, 8.8 and 7.4 degrees Celsius, respectively. Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, recorded a minimum temperature of 8.3 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal. In Haryana, Ambala recorded a low of 10 degrees Celsius, three notches above normal. Hisar registered a minimum of 8.9 degrees Celsius, while Karnal recorded 9 degrees Celsius, both two notches above average.

HANSI BECOMES HARYANA'S 23RD DISTRICT



Diary Times Desk : The Haryana government has issued a notification making Hansi a separate district, effective from today, Monday. With this, the state now has a total of 23 districts. In its statement, the government said "In exercise of the powers conferred by section 5 of the Haryana Land Revenue Act, 1887 (Punjab Act 17 of 1887) read with section 5 of the Registration Act, 1908 (Central Act 16 of 1908), the Governor of Haryana hereby varies the limits and alters the number of sub-division of district Hisar, so as to form a new District to be called Hansi comprising the sub-divisions of Hansi and Narnaul." Meanwhile, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said the land registration process in all tehsils across the state is entirely online, significantly reducing opportunities for corruption. Buyers can now apply for registration online from their homes. Tehsildars are required to complete registrations within a set timeframe. If a registration is not completed on time, the concerned tehsildar must submit a written explanation to the government. If the answer is found unsatisfactory, disciplinary action will be initiated, and the responsibility will be transferred to a senior officer, he said, according to a release. Earlier, the Delhi Cabinet approved the landmark proposal to reorganise Delhi's 11 existing revenue districts into 13 new revenue districts that will be fully co-terminus with the 12 MCD zones, NDMC, and Delhi Cantonment Board, a release said.

EDITORIAL

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?



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 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.

"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 its children.

INFA

A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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



Helen Regan
Tamil, 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.

Two human skeletons lie entangled on the rough earth – the arms of one wrapped around the other's head, as though protecting them from danger. Simply known as numbers 177 and 178, their identities remain a mystery.

They are among 240 human skeletal remains, including children and babies, uncovered at this mass gravesite in Chemmani in Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna district.

"This place is a crime scene no entry," reads a sign at the entrance.

Numbered white cards placed alongside the bones mark how many skeletons have been found since digging began in May of this year, reviving decades-old allegations of wartime atrocities and cover-ups.

In the heartland of the country's ethnic Tamil minority, a bloody and brutal history is re-emerging from the soil. But it is difficult to bury the past entirely.

From 1983 to 2009, the South Asian island nation of 21 million endured a brutal civil war between the Sri Lankan army and the separatist militant group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). More commonly known as The Tamil Tigers, the group was listed as a terrorist organization by many countries including the United States.

The war was fought along ethnic lines, pitting the majority Buddhist Sinhalese state against the predominantly Hindu ethnic minority rebels fighting for a separate Tamil homeland in the north and east after years of anti-Tamil violence. The Tigers were ultimately defeated.

Atrocities were committed by both sides, according to the United Nations, which estimates up to 100,000 people were killed in the conflict, with thousands of others forcibly disappeared.

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

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

A blue school bag

Just a stone's throw from a main road, the Chemmani gravesite is one of more than 20 mass graves identified in Sri Lanka.

Many of the gravesites that pockmark the north and east of the country are believed to contain the victims of atrocities committed during the civil war. Caught between warring rebel fighters and the Sri Lankan army, the Tamil community in these regions bore the brunt of the violence.

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

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

Their discovery prompted a court-ordered forensic excavation of the site in May and June, which initially uncovered 19 skeletons. Since then, the bones of hundreds more people have been found.

A baby's milk bottle, a blue schoolbag, bangles and cloth fragments have been uncovered alongside the bones.

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



TOP PICKS FROM AMERICANA WEEK, SELECTED BY OUR EXPERTS

Diary Times Desk : 'It's astoundingly rare for this important series of Eastman Johnson's Nantucket paintings to come to market, as most of the series reside in museum collections, including a closely related work at Yale. This painting's provenance from the Rockefeller family makes it even more special. Johnson began visiting Nantucket around 1870 and continued to go back every year, buying a home there. Cranberry Pickers is a study of the characters that formed the unique atmosphere of Nantucket, and it captures the light and air in a magical way. It represents the best of Johnson as a leading genre painter of the 19th century.'

'Fifty years ago, in an apartment in Mountain View, California, Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne signed an agreement establishing the Apple Computer Company. Wayne, a 41-year-old product designer at Atari, was enlisted by Jobs to help convince Wozniak to bring his prototype for a revolutionary new computer to market. The elder Wayne mediated between Jobs and Wozniak, then 21 and 25, and drafted the founding document. Just twelve days after signing, wary of the financial risk, Wayne sold his 10 per cent stake in the company for \$800. This document marks an extraordinarily important moment in history: the birth of the information revolution.'

'Jamie Wyeth was just 20 years old when, in the wake of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, he was approached by Jacqueline Kennedy and her family to create a portrait of the late president. Wyeth would not accept the commission unless he was allowed to keep the final painting. That final painting was later acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, about 10 years ago. This related work captures Kennedy striding to the podium to accept the Democratic nomination for president in 1960. To make it, Wyeth studied videos and sketches and accompanied Kennedy family members including Robert F. Kennedy on the campaign trail. Man from Boston combines these inspirations into a picture, which the artist has said is not just a portrait of Kennedy but of "all candidates, all people who want to make a difference." 'At their peak, the Shaker community numbered around 5,000 members, but their simple, functional and beautifully crafted furniture and objects had a profound influence on architecture and design. This set of 20 oval utility boxes were made of bentwood and secured with distinctive swallowtail joints, a hallmark of Shaker craftsmanship. My favorite part, though, is a handwritten letter tucked inside one box, from a Shaker woman named Elizabeth. As you read it, you realize she's writing to a man who left the community, and that she's heartbroken.'



JEAN PAUL GAULTIER: HOW FASHION'S 'ENFANT TERRIBLE' REDEFINED HERMÈS HANDBAGS

Diary Times Desk :

Jean Paul Gaultier's tenure as Creative Director of Hermès (2003-2010) was a celebrated chapter of creative brilliance. While his haute couture-inspired ready-to-wear captivated the fashion world, his most enduring influence perhaps lies in the realm of leather goods, especially handbags. His aesthetic vision permeated the brand's style universe. Here, we decode the most iconic Hermès bags he designed or reimagined.

Arguably Jean Paul Gaultier's most notable contribution to the Hermès bag lexicon, the So Black series was launched for Fall /Winter 2010, marking the end of his tenure at the brand. This series distinguished itself by coating all metal hardware, such as buckles, locks, and keys, on classic models in black PVD, resulting in a seamless, monochromatic aesthetic. The all black, mysterious, and disruptive collection quickly gained legendary status among collectors. It represented a bold departure from the traditional gold or palladium hardware, demonstrating that luxury could be powerful and modern in understated matte black. This focus shifted attention to the bag's silhouette, structure, and texture of the leather.

The innovative Shadow Birkin deconstructed the classic by flattening and geometrizing Birkin's iconic silhouette. It removed the physical hardware, instead embossing a trompe-l'œil of the lock and clochette directly onto the leather. Futuristic in spirit, it reads as the Birkin's 'shadow' or 'architectural blueprint'. This deconstruction of a classic ushers in a more avant-garde, experimental, and subtly humorous design language for Hermès.

Debuting on the runway in 2004, the Kelly Pochette is an extension of the classic Kelly bag. Its compact size was a quiet statement in an era of large bags. Gaultier recognized its potential, frequently featuring it in his runway shows and styling it with modern, edgy, even rock-inspired looks. This broke Kelly's potentially staid image, showcasing its versatility and chic appeal. Injecting his signature structuralist aesthetic, Gaultier radically reworked the Kelly bag's details in an unprecedented way. The So Kelly stretches the bag's body into an oversized, bowling bag-like bucket silhouette while retaining the classic turn-lock and double straps. Debuting for Fall/Winter 2008, this subversive design caused an immediate sensation.



FLICK REQUESTS BARCELONA FOR KEY REINFORCEMENT IN JANUARY BUT ENCOUNTERS MAJOR HURDLE



Diary Times Desk : There is concern at FC Barcelona about maintaining the team's level until the end of the season due to the growing number of absences in the defensive line. The absence of Ronald Araujo, due to mental health issues, had already set alarm bells ringing, and the injury to Andreas Christensen has left the defensive unit in a fragile position. As such, SPORT reports that Barcelona coach Hansi Flick is in favour of making a signing in central defence in January and has requested the club to explore the possibility. However, Flick's request has encountered some hurdles, as the club's financial situation makes the choice extremely difficult, and at present, none of the candidates under consideration are convincing. As such, a decision has been made to wait in the hope of finding an ideal loan option before the transfer window closes. Flick had already wanted to strengthen the defence during the summer transfer window after the unexpected departure of Inigo Martinez. But the sporting department informed him.

BARCELONA FACE FRESH RESISTANCE IN NEGOTIATIONS TO SIGN 17-YEAR-OLD GEM

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona's pursuit of emerging African talent has run into fresh resistance, with the proposed move for teenage striker Hamza Abdelkarim turning into a delicate test of patience and principle.

What initially looked like a straightforward development deal is now at risk of stalling as financial demands continue to shift. As reported by SPORT, Abdelkarim's current club, Al Ahly, have opened the door to a loan until June, but the conditions attached to that agreement are proving difficult for Barcelona to accept.

It is said that Al Ahly are now pushing for an €8 million purchase option, broken down into €2 million guaranteed and a further €6 million tied to performance-based variables. This latest position represents a significant hardening of stance from the Egyptian club and threatens to upset weeks of work behind the scenes. Barcelona had approached the operation with caution. Internally, the Catalan club were clear that a figure closer to €4 million would better reflect the player's current status. The gap between the parties does not stop at the base fee. Al Ahly are also demanding a 20% cut of any future transfer, a clause Barcelona see as excessive.

ON-LOAN BARCELONA PROSPECT DRAWING STRONG INTEREST FROM ITALY AND GERMANY – ROMANO

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona may be focused on results at the top of La Liga, but behind the scenes, the club is also keeping a careful eye on the development of one of their most promising young goalkeepers. According to information shared by Fabrizio Romano, several Italian and German clubs have been monitoring the progress of Aron Yakkobishvili during his loan spell this season. The 19-year-old Hungarian is currently playing for FC Andorra in La Liga 2, where he has quietly built a strong reputation with a series of assured performances.

Regular minutes at the senior level have allowed him to show his shot-stopping ability, command of the area, and composure with the ball at his feet, qualities that are highly valued in modern goalkeepers. Amid all this, Barcelona remain firmly in control of the situation. Despite the growing external interest, the club still see Yakkobishvili as a long-term project and are closely tracking his development. So far, the decision has paid off. At Andorra, Yakkobishvili has gained confidence and consistency, something that would have been difficult to achieve had he stayed in Barcelona without guaranteed playing time.

OFFICIAL: BARCELONA EARN SECOND-HIGHEST REVENUE FROM LA LIGA TELEVISION RIGHTS FOR 2024/25

Diary Times Desk : Earlier today, La Liga published the distribution of audiovisual rights for the 2024/25 season, one of the main sources of income for clubs. The league body has distributed €1.432 billion, compared to €1.498 billion in the previous season, between the first and second division clubs of Spanish football.

As per the official figures, FC Barcelona stand as the second club to receive the most money from La Liga television rights for the 2024/25 season, with €156.45 million, only surpassed by Real Madrid, who collected €157.92 million.

These figures are lower than those from the 2023/24 distribution, when Barcelona earned €162.49 million and Real Madrid €159.55 million. In the first division, 50% of the money generated from the sale of television rights is shared equally among the 20 clubs. A further 25% is allocated based on sporting results over the last five seasons, while the remaining 25% is determined by each club's social and commercial reach.

HINT DROPPED? BARCELONA PRIORITY TARGET FUELS SPECULATIONS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

Diary Times Desk : As has been well-established by this point, FC Barcelona want to sign a new centre-back in the summer transfer window of 2026. Alessandro Bastoni of Inter Milan, to that end, has been identified as the 'chosen one' by the current La Liga leaders and reigning champions.

A move for the Italian international, however, is unlikely to be easy, given that he is happy and settled at Inter Milan and would command a huge transfer fee in case there are any negotiations. However, Bastoni might have dropped a hint about him possibly being open to a transfer to Barcelona in the future.

Indeed, the 26-year-old defender has liked a comment from a fan on one of his Instagram posts, which reads: "Come to Barcelona". It must be noted that Bastoni acknowledged a few days ago that he was aware of the speculations linking him to the Catalans and that the reported rumours of interest made him proud.

"These rumours make me feel proud. Just like you read them, I read them too. It means I'm doing well, but there's nothing to it," Bastoni said in a press conference last week.

DISTURBING FIGURES REVEAL BARCELONA SUPERSTAR BECAME MAIN TARGET OF ONLINE HATE IN NOVEMBER

Diary Times Desk : A troubling report has shed light on the scale of abuse faced by Lamine Yamal, highlighting the darker side of fame that now follows one of Barcelona's brightest stars. It is said that the teenage forward accounted for 6% of all hate messages linked to sport on social media during the month of November.

The data comes from the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (Oberaxe) (h/t AS), which monitors racist and xenophobic behaviour online.

During November alone, the organisation detected a total of 39,054 racist or xenophobic messages across social media platforms.

Of those, 51% were removed, marking the highest removal rate recorded in any month so far, even surpassing July. Despite that improvement, the figures remain alarming, and Yamal's name sits uncomfortably at the centre of them. This is because the Barcelona winger became the most targeted figure in the sporting world during that period.

