

## NEWS IN BRIEF

HOCKEY STAR HARDIK SINGH LONE RECOMMENDATION FOR KHEL RATNA; DIVYA, TEJASWIN AND MEHULI FOR ARJUNA

**Diary Times Desk :** India men's hockey team vice-captain Hardik Singh was the sole recommendation for this year's Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna honour, while teenaged chess star Divya Deshmukh and trailblazing decathlete Tejaswin Shankar were among the 24 picked for the Arjuna awards by the selection committee here on Wednesday. The 27-year-old Hardik has been India's midfield mainstay and was a part of both the 2021 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympic Games medal-clinching teams.

This year, he was a part of India's Asia Cup gold-winning side. In a first, a Yoganas athlete, Aarti Pal, has been recommended for the Arjuna award, five years after it was formally recognised by the Sports Ministry, said a source. Aarti is the reigning national and Asian champion in the discipline that would be a demonstration sport at the 2026 Asian Games. Twenty-one other names have been finalised for the Arjuna by the awards selection panel after a meeting here on Wednesday.

## GIRL RAPED, MURDERED IN ODISHA, MOB DEMOLISHES ACCUSED'S HOUSE; OPPOSITION CALLS BANDH

**Diary Times Desk :** A 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped and murdered in Odisha's Bhadrak district, triggering a massive outrage with locals demolishing the accused's house, police said on Wednesday. Bhadrak SP Manoj Kumar Rout said one accused person was arrested from Jagatsinghpur district. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced a financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh for the next of kin of the victim, and directed officials to ensure proper investigation and "strictest possible punishment" for the accused in accordance with the law. Opposition parties BJD and Congress separately called a six-hour Chabali block bandh from 6 am on Thursday in protest against the incident. The incident came to the fore when some people found the body of the minor near a bush in Baligaon.

## AMIT SHAH NEWS

### CENTRE STANDS LIKE ROCK WITH STATES IN FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS, HUMAN TRAFFICKING: AMIT SHAH IN PANCHKULA



**Diary Times Desk :** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the Narendra Modi government stands like a rock with the states in their fight against drug and human trafficking, cybercrime and organised crime.

Shah said that a few years ago, there were three big challenges in the country in the matter of law and order — left-wing extremism, terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, and armed groups in the northeast.

"But after 10 years from the formation of the Modi government, there is peace in these three areas, and the country is safe on these three fronts," he claimed. Shah was addressing the Passing Out Parade (POP) of the Recruit Basic Course (RBC) Batch-93 here.

Addressing the recruits, he said, "Your leadership is ready for it, and you will have to strengthen the hands of your leadership." "We stand like a rock with the states," he said, referring to the Union government. He said that the role of forensic science under the new criminal laws has been decided.

"In crimes in which punishment is more than seven years, a visit by forensic experts to the scene of the crime has been made compulsory, and the main objective of this is to ensure punishment for the guilty," he said. Shah told the constables that they were joining the police force at a time when the Colonial-era laws had been replaced by the new criminal laws. He said the batch is the first from Haryana since the implementation of the new criminal laws. As many as 5,061 newly trained constables formally joined the state police force from the batch. This is the first batch in which 85 per cent youth are graduates and above, with an average age of 26, Shah said.

### NOT JUST DEAD ECONOMY, WE'RE TURNING INTO DEAD SOCIETY TOO: RAHUL GANDHI ON UNNAO RAPE VICTIM'S ILL-TREATMENT

**Diary Times Desk :** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said India is not just becoming a dead economy but also a dead society after alleged ill-treatment of the Unnao rape survivor.

Gandhi said the rape survivor, who was protesting in Delhi against the bail granted to accused Kuldeep Singh Sengar by the high court, should be treated with respect and that justice should be ensured to her, instead of giving her injustice and fear. "Is such treatment of a gang rape survivor appropriate? Is it her 'fault' that she has the courage to raise her voice for justice? The fact that her perpetrator (former BJP MLA Sengar) has been granted bail is extremely disappointing and shameful — especially when the survivor is being repeatedly harassed and is living under the shadow of fear," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said in a post in Hindi on X.

"Bail for rapists and treating survivors like criminals — what kind of justice is this? We are not just becoming a dead economy — with such inhuman incidents, we are also turning into a dead society," he said. Gandhi added that in a democracy, raising a voice of dissent is a right and suppressing it is a crime. "The survivor deserves respect, safety and justice — not helplessness, fear and injustice," he asserted. The 2017 Unnao rape survivor on Wednesday termed the Delhi High Court's decision to suspend the jail term of expelled BJP leader Sengar "kaa" (death) for her family and said she would move the Supreme Court against the order.



## ISRO NEWS

### LAUNCH OF HEAVIEST SATELLITE 'BLUEBIRD BLOCK-2' BY ISRO HAS SEVERAL OTHER FIRSTS FOR THE SPACE AGENCY



**Diary Times Desk :** "BlueBird Block-2 satellite successfully separated. LVM-3 M6 Blue Bird Block 2 mission successfully accomplished," the deep voice of the Range Director resonated across ISRO's launch control room at Sriharikota at 9:11 AM Indian time on Wednesday. With this, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) crossed a new milestone by launching the heaviest ever satellite from Indian soil.

It took 15 minutes and 30 seconds for ISRO's Launch Vehicle Mark - 3 (LVM-3) to place the 6,100 kg American satellite into its intended orbit around 520 kilometres above the Earth after a perfect lift-off from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota on the eastern seaboard north of Chennai.

This is the ninth flight and the sixth operational mission of LVM-3, ISRO's most powerful rocket till date which has been used for other missions like the Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3. Today's mission also marks the positioning of the largest satellite in a low earth orbit. Built by ATS SpaceMobile, it is part of a global constellation to provide direct-to-mobile connectivity through satellites. "Powered by India's youth, our space programme is getting more advanced and impactful. With LVM3 demonstrating reliable heavy-lift performance.

### CENTRE IMPOSES BAN ON NEW MINING LEASES IN ARAVALLIS; PROTECTED ZONE TO BE EXPANDED



**Diary Times Desk :** The Centre on Wednesday issued directions to states for a complete ban on granting new mining leases in the Aravallis, officials said.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has also directed the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) to identify additional areas and zones in the entire Aravallis where mining should be prohibited over and above the areas already prohibited for mining by the Centre. "This prohibition applies uniformly across the entire Aravalli landscape and is intended to preserve the integrity of the range. The directions are aimed at safeguarding the Aravallis as a continuous geological ridge extending from Gujarat to NCR and at stopping all remaining mining activities," a senior official said. "The ministry has also directed the ICFRE to identify additional areas and zones in the entire Aravallis, where mining should be prohibited, over and above the areas already prohibited for mining by the Centre, based on ecological, geological and landscape-level considerations," the official added. The ICFRE has been directed to undertake this exercise while preparing a comprehensive, science-based Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) for the entire Aravalli region.

### 'WE HAVE COME TOGETHER TO STAY TOGETHER,' SAYS UDDHAV IN RAJ THACKERAY'S PRESENCE



**Diary Times Desk :** Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray on Wednesday announced the alliance of their parties ahead of the January 15 Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections, putting months of speculation to rest.

Addressing a joint news conference with Raj, Uddhav said the two parties have come together to stay together.

Raj, however, did not share details of the seat-sharing between the two parties for the high-stakes BMC elections. "Mumbai's mayor will be Marathi and will be ours," Raj said.

Uddhav said the parties have finalised their seat-sharing for the Nashik Municipal Corporation where elections are due on January 15, along with Mumbai and 27 other municipal corporations in the state.

Talks are under way for an alliance between the two parties in other civic bodies, he added. "Those who can't bear to see what is happening in the BJP can also come with us," Uddhav said.

### 'KAAL' FOR MY FAMILY: UNNAO RAPE SURVIVOR ON SUSPENSION OF SENGAR'S JAIL TERM; TO MOVE SC



**Diary Times Desk :** The 2017 Unnao rape survivor on Wednesday termed the Delhi High Court's decision to suspend the jail term of the accused, expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar, "kaal" (death) for her family and said she would move the Supreme Court against it.

Women's rights activist Yogita Bhayana, who staged a protest with the rape survivor's mother at India Gate on Tuesday night, shared a video on X, in which the rape survivor was purportedly heard saying that she had left home in the morning to meet her lawyer but Central Reserve Police force (CRPF) personnel tried to send her back home. "I was shouting that I need to visit my lawyer. I was shouting in the vehicle as well and then an order came from the top to take me (to meet my lawyer)," she said. "All I want is justice," she added. Bhayana also claimed that the rape survivor was injured in the melee.

Reacting to the Unnao rape survivor's ordeals, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said India is not just becoming a dead economy, but also a dead society.



## PROTESTS ERUPT AT BENGAL LAND PORTS OVER ATROCITIES AGAINST HINDUS IN BANGLADESH



**Diary Times Desk :** Members of a pro-Hindu organisation staged demonstrations at several land ports along the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal to protest the killing of a man from the minority community in the neighbouring country. Scuffles also broke out between police personnel and BJP supporters during a protest in Howrah district. Trouble began after police stopped a procession by the saffron party before it could reach Howrah Bridge, triggering heated arguments between protesters and security personnel. "We will not allow anyone to disrupt normal life or inconvenience commuters in the garb of protest. We will act in accordance with the law to thwart any attempts to create trouble," a senior Howrah Police officer told PTI. As police prevented the march from proceeding, protesters squatted on the road and attempted to break through barricades, leading to clashes. Police alleged that the demonstrators turned aggressive, forcing security personnel to intervene and disperse them. Members of the Sanatani Aikya Parishad held demonstrations at the Petrapole.

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## UNNAO RAPE CASE SURVIVOR TO MOVE SC AGAINST SUSPENSION OF SENGAR'S JAIL TERM

**Diary Times Desk :** The survivor of the 2017 Unnao rape case on Wednesday termed the Delhi High Court's decision to suspend the jail term of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar as "kaal" (death) for her family and said she would move the Supreme Court against the order. On Tuesday, the Delhi High Court suspended Sengar's life sentence in the rape case and granted him bail pending the disposal of his appeal against his conviction by a trial court in December 2019. The court directed that Sengar must not enter a five-kilometre radius of the victim's residence and must not threaten the survivor or her mother. Any violation of these conditions would automatically lead to the cancellation of bail, the court said. However, Sengar will remain in jail as he is also serving a 10-year sentence in the custodial death case of the survivor's father and has not been granted bail in that matter. Reacting to the verdict, the survivor.

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## OVER 40 LAKH STUDENTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GUJARAT GET NUTRITIOUS FOOD UNDER GOVT SCHEME

**Diary Times Desk :** More than 40 lakh students from over 32,000 primary schools across Gujarat are receiving calorie and protein-rich nutrition under a state government scheme, officials said. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel launched this scheme — Mukhyamantri Paustik Alpahar Yojana — in 2024, under which students in government and grant-in-aid primary schools receive nutritious breakfast in addition to the mid-day meal provided under the PM Poshan Yojana. Under this scheme, students are provided with nutritious food containing an average of 200 kilocalories and six grams of protein. At present, more than 40 lakh students from 32,265 primary schools across the state are receiving calorie and protein-rich nutrition. Emphasising the importance of nutrition alongside children's education, CM Patel said, "Along with the mid-day meal in government schools, this initiative provides fresh and nutritious breakfast. As a result, students' interest in government schools has increased, along with an improvement in their nutritional levels. "The state government also remains committed to ensuring that government schools are adequately equipped with essential facilities, including modern classrooms, drinking water, electricity, toilets, sanitation and transportation, he said.

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## AIR INDIA TO RESUME FLIGHTS TO ROME, INDIGO TO LAUNCH DELHI-LONDON SERVICE

**Diary Times Desk :** Air travellers are set to get an enhanced connectivity between India and Europe next year with Tata Group-run Air India announcing resumption of flight services to Rome (Italy) and IndiGo announcing plans to launch its services to London Heathrow from Delhi. Air India, which used to operate its flight services to the Italian capital city from Delhi till early 2020, had to suspend them in the wake of the Covid pandemic. IndiGo already operates daily, direct flights between Mumbai and London Heathrow, and will now operate 12 weekly flights to London. Beginning March 25, 2026, Air India will operate four times a week between Delhi and Rome (Leonardo da Vinci International Airport - Fiumicino), marking the airline's return to the Italian capital after nearly six years and further expansion of its growing European network, Air India said. The service to/from Rome will operate on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays on Air India's Boeing 787-8 aircraft, featuring 18 flat beds in business and 238 seats in economy class, it said. "Connecting India to more of the world remains one of our top priorities. India and Italy share deep-rooted

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## CHENNAI STUDENTS WIN NASA AWARD FOR AFFORDABLE, HOMEGROWN SATELLITE INTERNET

**Diary Times Desk :** A team of Chennai-based engineering students has beaten over 18,000 projects worldwide to win the "Most Inspirational" award at the NASA International Space Apps Challenge 2025. Their project, "Photonics Odyssey" or AakashNet, aims to bridge the digital divide in India by delivering high-speed, low-cost internet to the country's most remote villages. "AakashNet conceptually adopts the working philosophy long demonstrated by ISRO," Prasanth Gopalakrishnan, a second year electronics and communication engineering student of SRM Easwari Engineering College, said. At the NASA International Space Apps Challenge, one of the world's largest annual global hackathons, the team's submission made it to the top 10 projects, winning the 'Most Inspirational' award. Launched in 2012, the challenge hopes to foster innovation using NASA's free and open data from satellites, telescopes and missions and create solutions for Earth and space.

## ISRO LAUNCHES HEAVIEST FOREIGN SATELLITE FROM INDIAN SOIL ABOARD LVM3

**Diary Times Desk :** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) heaviest ever satellite BlueBird Block-2 weighing 6,100 kg was successfully launched this morning. In this mission, LVM3-M6 placed the BlueBird Block-2 satellite, into the Low Earth Orbit and is the largest commercial communications satellite to be deployed in Low Earth Orbit. The satellite is part of a next generation of BlueBird Block-2 communication satellites, designed to provide space-based cellular broadband connectivity directly to standard mobile smartphones. The LVM3-M6 / BlueBird Block-2 Mission is a dedicated commercial mission onboard the LVM3 launch vehicle, which launched the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite of AST SpaceMobile, USA. This mission marks the 6th operational flight of LVM3. LVM3, developed by ISRO, is a three-stage launch vehicle comprising two solid strap-on motors (S200), a liquid core stage (L110), and a cryogenic upper stage (C25). In its earlier missions, LVM3 successfully launched Chandrayaan-2.

## AS DELHI METRO COMPLETES 23 YEARS, FIRST TRAIN TS#01 STILL ON TRACK

**Diary Times Desk :** Even as the Delhi Metro completed 23 years of operations on Wednesday, the first-ever train inducted into the network in 2002 continues to run in passenger service. The Delhi Metro commenced services on the morning of December 24, 2002. Since then, it has become one of India's most successful mass rapid transit systems, the DMRC asserted in a statement issued on Wednesday to mark 23 years of operations. Train Set TS#01, the first train to operate on the Delhi Metro network, remains part of the active fleet even today, it stated, emphasising that this reflects the system's long-term reliability and maintenance standards. The train has undergone multiple upgrades over the years to meet evolving global standards and rising passenger demand, the DMRC stated. Originally commissioned as a four-coach train, TS#01 was expanded to six coaches in 2014 and further to eight coaches in 2023. Since entering revenue service, the train has run approximately 2.9 million kilometres.

## 'THOKO TAALI!' NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU RETURNS TO KAPIL SHARMA SHOW WITH RS 40 LAKH EPISODE FEE

**Diary Times Desk :** The fourth season of Kapil Sharma's flagship comedy-talk show hit Netflix on December 20, 2025, and fans are already losing their minds. The premiere episode featured global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who flew in from Hollywood just for the night, adding a "Desi Girl" spark to the opening act. But the real crowd-pleaser is Navjot Singh Sidhu, resuming his iconic special-guest chair alongside Archana Puran Singh. After a five-year hiatus, Sidhu's return in Season 3 was a sensation – he graced 11 of the 14 episodes, missing only episodes 2, 3 and 13. Siasat reported his per-episode fee to be a whopping Rs 30–Rs 40 lakh, turning his three-month stint into an estimated Rs 3.3–Rs 4.4 crore windfall. Kapil even cracked a joke on-air, thanking Netflix for "increasing the budget so we can afford Sidhu paaji", which had the studio in splits. Season 4 rolls out a fresh "Mastiverse" vibe, with Kapil debuting a new character Raja and the core troupe – Sunil Grover (DiamondRaja), Kiku Sharda (Motapa) and Krushna Abhishek (Largemata) – all back in action.



## TEARS OF JOY AS NIGERIAN FAMILIES REUNITE WITH KIDNAPPED SCHOOLCHILDREN



**Diary Times Desk :** In a Christmas reunion, families and villagers in north-central Nigeria cried and hugged schoolchildren who were held for a month after being seized in one of the largest mass abductions in the country's history. The 130 schoolchildren and teachers were released on Sunday and brought home in Niger state's Papiri community late Wednesday night, marking the last batch freed since the November 21 attack on St Mary's Catholic School in Papiri.

Mothers with teary eyes hugged their kids tightly while other children were lifted high in the air, their faces beaming with joy as villagers called out to them and examined them carefully to make sure they were not harmed. "This Christmas, since we are celebrating Christmas with our children, we are so glad. And this Christmas will be different from the others," said Yusuf Timothy, whose daughter, Rejoice, was among those freed. "I am happy, I am happy," said Rita Marcus, who was reunited with her son, tears flowing down her face. "This happiness, it is too much." School kidnappings driven by ransoms have become a major security issue in Africa's most populous country. Authorities earlier said 303 schoolchildren and 12 teachers were seized in the Niger state attack but later revised the number to 230, adding that all had now been released, without stating how. Most of the children were aged between 10 and 17, the school said. Onyeka Chieme, one of the students, earlier told The Associated Press that gunmen threatened to shoot them during the attack.

## 'ANYONE WHO ATTACKS MY WIFE CAN EAT...': JD VANCE SLAMS RACIST SLURS AGAINST USHA

**Diary Times Desk :** US Vice President J D Vance has lashed out at commentators for remarks against his Indian-origin wife Second Lady Usha Vance. Vance's remarks came in response to comments by right-wing podcaster Nick Fuentes, who used an ethnic slur to describe Usha and had referred to the Vice President as a "race traitor" on one of his livestreams. "... let me be clear: anyone who attacks my wife, whether their name is Jen Psaki or Nick Fuentes, can eat shit. That's my official policy as vice president of the United States," Vance said. "And my attitude towards anybody, again, who is calling for judging people based on their ethnic heritage, whether they're Jewish or white or anything else, it's disgusting. We shouldn't be doing it," he said in an interview to UnHerd over the weekend. "Anti-semitism, and all forms of ethnic hatred, have no place in the conservative movement. Whether you are attacking somebody because they're white or because they are black or because they're Jewish, I think it's disgusting," he said. Fuentes, in one of his livestreams, said, "And now they're all in favour of a fat, race mixer who's married to a jeet, who named his son Vivek ... and that's your guy?"

## NEW SET OF 30,000 EPSTEIN PAGES RELEASED: TRUMP ACCUSED OF 'SEXUAL ABUSE', BUT US JUSTICE DEPT RUBBISHES CLAIM



**Diary Times Desk :** President Donald Trump flew on convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's private jet "many more times than previously has been reported," according to an email from a New York prosecutor that forms part of a new batch of documents about Epstein released Tuesday by the US Justice Department. In an email dated January 7, 2020, the unidentified prosecutor wrote that flight records showed Trump had flown on Epstein's private jet eight times during the 1990s. Among those were at least four flights on which Epstein associate Ghislaine Maxwell was also aboard. Maxwell is serving a 20-year prison sentence for helping late financier Epstein sexually abuse underage girls. In a social media post in 2024, Trump said he "was never on Epstein's Plane, or at his 'stupid' Island." There was no allegation in the prosecutor's email that Trump had committed any crime. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the email.

## ISRAEL ACCUSES HAMAS OF VIOLATING GAZA TRUCE, SAYS IT WILL RESPOND

**Diary Times Desk :** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hamas on Wednesday of violating the Gaza ceasefire agreement after a military officer was wounded by an explosive device in Rafah and Israel vowed retaliation. His office said in a statement that Hamas must fully uphold the October agreement, noting that it envisaged the militant group being removed from power in Gaza as well as demilitarisation and deradicalisation of the territory. "Israel will respond accordingly," the statement added. The Israeli military earlier said that an explosive device had detonated against a military vehicle in the southern Rafah area of Gaza and that one officer had been lightly injured. Violence has subsided but not stopped since the Gaza truce took effect on October 10, and the sides have regularly accused each other of violating the ceasefire. Gaza's health ministry says Israel has killed more than 400 people in the territory since the ceasefire went into effect.



## PRO-RUSSIAN HACKERS CLAIM CYBERATTACK ON FRENCH POSTAL SERVICE

**Diary Times Desk :** A pro-Russian hacking group has claimed responsibility for a major cyberattack that disrupted package deliveries at France's national postal service just days before Christmas, prosecutors said on Wednesday. Following the claim by the cybercrime group Noname057, the French domestic intelligence agency DGSI took over the investigation, according to a statement from the Paris prosecutor's office to The Associated Press. The group has previously been accused of carrying out cyberattacks across Europe, including during a NATO summit in the Netherlands and against French government websites. It was also targeted in a large European police operation earlier this year. La Poste said that its central computer systems were knocked offline on Monday in a distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack. As of Wednesday morning, the disruption had not yet been fully resolved.

## LIBYA'S MILITARY CHIEF, 7 OTHERS KILLED IN PLANE CRASH IN TURKEY

**Diary Times Desk :** A private jet carrying Libya's military chief, four other officers and three crew members crashed on Tuesday after takeoff from Turkey's capital, Ankara, killing everyone on board.

Libyan officials said the cause of the crash was a technical malfunction on the plane. The Libyan delegation was in Ankara for high-level defence talks aimed at boosting military cooperation between the two countries, Turkish officials said.

Libyan Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah confirmed the death of Gen Muhammad Ali Ahmad al-Haddad and the four officials, saying in a statement on Facebook that the "tragic accident" took place as the delegation was returning home. The prime minister called it a "great loss" for Libya.

Al-Haddad was the top military commander in western Libya and played a crucial role in the ongoing, UN-brokered efforts to unify Libya's military, which has split, much like Libya's institutions. The four other officers who died in the crash were Gen Al-Fitouri Ghraibil, the head of Libya's ground forces; Brig Gen Mahmoud Al-Qatawi, who led the military manufacturing authority; Mohammed Al-Asawi Diab, advisor to the chief of staff; and Mohammed Omar Ahmed Mahjoub, a military photographer with the chief of staff's office. The identities of the three crew members were not immediately known.

## "HEAVIEST PAYLOAD LAUNCH REFLECTS INDIA'S GROWING TECHNOLOGICAL PROWESS": JAISHANKAR ON ISRO'S LVM3-M6 LAUNCH

**Diary Times Desk :** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday praised the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for the successful launch of LVM3-M6 'Bahubali', describing the mission as a reflection of India's advancing technological strength and emphasis on self-reliance. In a post on X, Jaishankar said, "Congratulations to Team @isro on the successful launch of LVM3-M6 'Bahubali', placing the 6+ tonnes Bluebird Block-2 communication satellite into Low Earth Orbit." Underscoring the importance of the achievement, he said, "This launch of the heaviest payload ever from Indian soil reflects India's growing technological prowess," and noted that it also demonstrated the "success of #AatmanirbharBharat under the leadership of PM @narendramodi." His remarks came after ISRO's LVM3-M6 mission successfully took off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Wednesday under a commercial arrangement with US-based AST SpaceMobile. The 43.5-metre-tall LVM3 launch vehicle, fitted with two S200 solid strap-on boosters, lifted off at 8.55 am from the second launch pad following the completion of a 24-hour countdown. Nearly 15 minutes after liftoff, the BlueBird Block-2 satellite separated from the rocket and was placed into its designated Low Earth Orbit at an altitude of around 520 km, according to ISRO. ISRO said the BlueBird Block-2 satellite, with a mass of about 6,100 kg, is the heaviest payload ever delivered by the LVM3 into Low Earth Orbit, surpassing the earlier benchmark of a 4,400-kg communication satellite launched in November.



## UAE INKS AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT PEOPLE OF SUDAN IN HEALTHCARE WITH INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS - UK

**Diary Times Desk :** The UAE Aid Agency has signed a cooperation agreement with International Medical Corps-UK to support the provision of healthcare to Sudanese people affected by the recent spurt in interneccine violence. The agreement pertains specifically to a project implemented by the Medical Corps titled "Emergency Response to the Crisis in Sudan". According to the agreement, the UAE Aid Agency will contribute USD 2,000,000 to the project. The agreement was signed at a ceremony held at the Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation in the presence of Tareq Al Ameri, Chairman of the UAE Aid Agency. It was signed by Rashid Al Shamsi, Executive Director of Logistics at the UAE Aid Agency, and David Eastman.

## EAST TURKISTAN GOVT IN EXILE CONDEMN CHINA FOR GENOCIDE, SEEKS RECOGNITION OF OCCUPATION

**Diary Times Desk :** The East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE) recently marked the 76th anniversary of what it described as the illegal occupation of East Turkistan, referred to by China as "Xinjiang", by the People's Republic of China (PRC). The ETGE reiterated its urgent call for international intervention to end what it said were ongoing atrocities and to restore East Turkistan's independence. According to an ETGE press release, the anniversary commemorates events in 1949, when the PRC launched a military invasion of East Turkistan just 11 days after its founding by the Chinese Communist Party. As per the press release, a demonstration was held in front of the White House on December 21, 2025, where the ETGE and the East Turkistan National Movement honoured.

## TATA ADVANCED SYSTEMS HANDS OVER FIRST LOT OF WHAP 8X8 VEHICLES TO ROYAL MOROCCAN ARMY

**Diary Times Desk :** Tata Advanced Systems Limited on Wednesday announced the handover of the first lot of WhAP 8x8 armoured vehicles to the Royal Moroccan Army, marking a key milestone in defence cooperation between India and Morocco. Sharing the update in a post on X, Tata Advanced Systems said, "A proud milestone! First lot of WhAP 8x8 handed over to the Royal Moroccan Army, Kingdom of Morocco. Strengthening partnerships. Delivering proven capability. Made in Morocco." The handover reflects sustained efforts to position India's indigenously designed and developed Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP) 8x8 on the global defence stage. The platform has been jointly developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) and has increasingly been showcased as a symbol of "Indian defence innovation". Earlier, in a post on X dated September 25, DRDO said the WhAP was "Ready to take Indian defence innovation to global stage," sharing visuals of the platform undergoing desert and Ladakh trials, along with demonstrations of its amphibious capabilities. The visuals also highlighted the WhAP's remote-controlled weapon system (RCWS).



## US BORDER PATROL ARREST 30 INDIAN NATIONALS LIVING ILLEGALLY IN AMERICA

**Diary Times Desk :** US border patrol agents have arrested 30 Indian nationals, living illegally in America, operating semitrucks with commercial driver's licences. Border Patrol agents in the El Centro Sector in California arrested 49 illegal immigrants with commercial driver's licenses during vehicle stops at immigration checkpoints and in interagency operations, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said in a statement last week.

Between November 23 and December 12, agents apprehended 42 illegal individuals operating semitrucks with commercial driver's licences while travelling on interstate or traversing immigration checkpoints.

Of those arrested, 30 were from India, two were from El Salvador, and the remainder were from China, Eritrea, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Russia, Somalia, Turkey, and Ukraine. California issued 31 of the commercial driver's licences; eight licenses were issued by Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, the agency said.

## SINGAPORE'S INDIAN-ORIGIN HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER M RAVI FOUND DEAD; POLICE PROBE ON

**Diary Times Desk :** An Indian-origin former lawyer, M Ravi, widely known for representing death row inmates, including Malaysians, in Singapore, has died on Wednesday at 56. He was found dead in the early hours of December 24, according to a report by The Straits Times. The police are investigating a case of unnatural death, said the daily report.

Ravi, whose full name was Ravi Madasamy, was born in 1969 and was a lawyer for more than 25 years. He had also been in the news over his conduct, and was an advocate for the LGBTQ community and supported the abolition of the death penalty. Ravi was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2006.

Lawyer Eugene Thuraisingam, who had previously served as Ravi's counsel, said that he "was a man who stood up for and fought hard in court for what he believed in". "He was dedicated to his pro bono work and deeply cared for his clients," the Channel News Asia quoted Thuraisingam as saying. "He was a friend and he will be deeply missed by all in the legal fraternity." According to the Encyclopedia of Singapore Tamils, an online resource, Ravi was a graduate of the National University of Singapore and Cardiff University and was called to the Bar in 1996.

### PENTAGON REPORT TO US CONGRESS FLAGS CHINA'S 'CORE INTEREST' CLAIM ON ARUNACHAL PRADESH

**Diary Times Desk :** A Pentagon report submitted to the US Congress has flagged China's claim over India's Arunachal Pradesh as part of its stated "core interests", underscoring Beijing's broader national strategy aimed at achieving the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049. The report notes that China's leadership has expanded the scope of its "core interests" to include Taiwan, sovereignty claims and maritime disputes in the South China Sea, the Senkaku Islands, and the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Chinese officials have described the unification of China and contested territories, particularly Taiwan, as a "natural requirement" for national rejuvenation. Under this strategic vision, a rejuvenated China would operate at a new global level and field a "world-class" military capable of "fight and win" operations, while "resolutely safeguarding" the country's sovereignty, security and development interests. The document outlines that China identifies three "core interests" that are central to national rejuvenation and not open to negotiation or compromise.

MERRY CHRISTMAS



### US SUPREME COURT REFUSES DEPLOYMENT OF NATIONAL GUARD IN CHICAGO

**Diary Times Desk :** The United States Supreme Court on Tuesday (local time) refused the deployment of the National Guard in Chicago over the objection of Illinois officials, amid doubt on the viability of such deployments in other cities, the New York Times reported. The preliminary order barred the Trump administration from directing a state-based military force to the Chicago area, where an immigration enforcement drive had triggered arrests and confrontations between residents and federal authorities. The court declined to grant the president wide-ranging discretion to deploy the military in American cities. The New York Times reported that at this stage in the case, the court said the Trump administration had not shown that the statute at issue "permits the president to federalise the Guard in the exercise of inherent authority to protect federal personnel and property in Illinois." Three conservative justices, Clarence Thomas, Samuel A Alito Jr and Neil M Gorsuch, dissented.

### "RUSSIA MUST NOT SABOTAGE DIPLOMACY": VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY CALLS FOR "ADDITIONAL PRESSURE" ON MOSCOW AFTER AERIAL ATTACKS

**Diary Times Desk :** Following one of the largest aerial attacks by Russia, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday (local time) called for "additional pressure" on the neighbouring country to end the war, while stating that Kyiv has never been an "obstacle to peace." Russia had launched an aerial attack on Ukraine overnight on Monday, firing more than 650 drones and over 30 missiles across at least 13 regions, killing three people, including a four-year-old child. In a video message to Ukrainians, President Zelensky said that the key to a peace agreement is that Russia must not sabotage diplomacy. While stating that the Russian aerial strike targeted Ukraine's energy sector, Zelensky assured the public that electricity would be restored for Christmas.

### TAIWAN DETECTS FIVE CHINESE AIRCRAFT, EIGHT NAVAL VESSELS, ONE SHIP AROUND NATION

**Diary Times Desk :** Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence detected five sorties of Chinese aircraft, eight naval vessels and one ship operating around the country as of 6 am (local time) on Wednesday. As per the MND, of the five sorties, one crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ).

"Five sorties of PLA aircraft, eight PLAN vessels and one official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 am (UTC+8) today. One out of five sorties crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded," the ministry said in a X post.

Earlier on Tuesday, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence detected six sorties of Chinese aircraft and six naval vessels operating around the country as of 6 am (local time). As per the MND, of the seven sorties, two crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). "Six sorties of PLA aircraft and six PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 am (UTC+8) today. Two out of six sorties crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded," the ministry said in a X post.



### US LAWMAKERS WARN BANGLADESH AGAINST PARTY BANS, FLAWED TRIBUNAL AHEAD OF POLLS

**Diary Times Desk :** As Bangladesh heads toward general elections in February amid continued political tension, a group of United States lawmakers has warned the country's interim administration that suspending political parties and reviving the "flawed International Crimes Tribunal" could damage the credibility of the electoral process. They instead called for an inclusive and credible democratic transition. The cautionary message comes as Interim Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has reiterated that national elections will be held on February 12, saying Bangladesh aims to restore democratic rights that were eroded under an autocratic system. In this context, US Representatives Gregory W Meeks, Bill Huizenga and Sydney Kamlager-Dove wrote to Chief Adviser Yunus, voicing concern that banning political organisations could disenfranchise significant segments of the electorate and weaken democratic legitimacy at a crucial juncture. "We welcome your willingness to step forward at a moment of national crisis in Bangladesh to lead an interim government ahead of elections in February," the lawmakers wrote. They stressed that the interim government should engage with political parties across the spectrum to ensure conditions for free.

### BALOCH YAKJEHTI COMMITTEE RAISES ALARM OVER DISAPPEARANCES OF BALOCH WOMEN

**Diary Times Desk :** The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) has called on the public in Balochistan to mobilise against what it refers to as an escalating trend of enforced disappearances affecting Baloch women. This plea follows a statement from its senior leader, Sabiha Baloch, who urged the Baloch populace to break their silence and voice their concerns over these actions, as reported by The Balochistan Post (TBP). In a video message shared on Sunday, Sabiha Baloch highlighted that enforced disappearances in Balochistan have extended beyond men and young activists, now increasingly impacting Baloch women. She noted that in recent days, numerous women have reportedly been forcibly taken by Pakistani forces, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), and intelligence agencies, including an eight-month pregnant woman, two youths with disabilities, and a mother with her child, as per the TBP report. Sabiha condemned the abduction of a pregnant woman, describing it as not only a grave.

## DONALD TRUMP DISCUSSES LAUNCH OF US-UZBEKISTAN BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT COUNCIL WITH UZBEK PRESIDENT



**Diary Times Desk :** United States President Donald Trump on Tuesday (local time) held a telephonic conversation with his Uzbek counterpart, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, over the launch of the US-Uzbekistan Business and Investment Council. According to the US Ambassador to India and Special Envoy to South and Central Asia, Sergio Gor, Shavkat Mirziyoyev called President Trump the "President of peace to the world." "Earlier today, President Donald Trump spoke with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan. @president\_uz stated that "President Trump is the President of Peace to the World." I couldn't agree more! Under President Trump's leadership, countless conflicts have come to an end, and the world is a better place," Sergio Gor wrote on X. The US Ambassador's remark echoes Trump's claim of ending eight wars. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's press service stated on X, "Presidents Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Donald Trump held a telephone conversation, exchanging warm greetings for the upcoming New Year holidays. Sides discussed progress on joint agreements and projects, highlighting the launch of the US-Uzbekistan Business and Investment Council, as well as reaffirming readiness to continue active contacts at all levels."

## VENEZUELA'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PASSES LAW TO PROTECT NAVIGATION, TRADE FREEDOM

**Diary Times Desk :** Venezuela's National Assembly on Tuesday passed a law aimed at guaranteeing and protecting freedom of navigation and trade against piracy, blockades and other illicit international acts, following U.S. seizures of vessels carrying Venezuelan oil in the Caribbean. The "Law to Guarantee Freedom of Navigation and Commerce Against Piracy, Blockades, and Other International Illicit Acts" was declared approved by National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez after the vote. The legislation was passed during an extraordinary session and under urgent procedures, following U.S. seizures of vessels carrying Venezuelan oil on the high seas, and it allows prison sentences of up to 20 years for anyone who promotes or finances what it describes as piracy or blockades. The law seeks to safeguard Venezuela's commercial and political relations from what authorities describe as threats by the United States. On Monday, the National Assembly approved the bill.

## NO MORE H-1B LOTTERY, US NOTIFIES NEW PROCESS FOR WORK VISAS

**Diary Times Desk :** The Donald Trump administration in the United States is replacing its longstanding H-1B work visa lottery system with a new weighted approach that prioritises skilled, higher-paid foreign workers, a change expected to make it significantly harder for entry-level professionals, including those from India, to secure work visas in America. The overhaul follows a series of actions by the Trump administration aimed at reshaping a visa programme that critics say has become a pipeline for overseas workers willing to work for lower pay, but supporters say drives innovation. According to the Department of Homeland Security, the new rule will take effect on February 27, 2026. It will govern the allocation of approximately 85,000 H-1B visas annually beginning with the fiscal 2027 registration season. "The existing random selection process of H-1B registrations was exploited and abused by US employers who were primarily seeking to import.

## "SRI LANKA WILL ALWAYS FIND INDIA BY ITS SIDE": PM MODI ASSURES COLOMBO OF SUPPORT IN AFTERMATH OF CYCLONE DITWAH

**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written to Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, assuring India's support to the neighbouring country in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Ditrwa. Prime Minister Modi stated that India will stand with Sri Lanka for "rebuilding lives and ensuring resilience." Hailing India's Operation Sagar Bandhu to assist cyclone-hit Sri Lanka, he noted that the supplies and emergency materials, along with Indian teams aiding in search and rescue efforts, helped the neighbouring country to deal with the medical emergencies and restore connectivity and communications. PM Modi wrote, "In line with our 'Neighbourhood First' policy and First Responder commitment, we undertook Operation Sagar Bandhu to address the immediate challenges. Indian ships, aircraft and helicopters brought relief supplies and emergency materials. They supported your search and rescue efforts while specialised Indian teams were pressed into service to handle medical emergencies and restore critical connectivity and communications. We are glad that Operation Sagar Bandhu touched many lives in Sri Lanka and was widely perceived as an expression of our deep bonding." "As Sri Lanka now shifts its attention to the next phase, I would like to assure you that India will extend all possible support as a trusted partner and a reliable friend. As in the past, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with you in rebuilding lives and ensuring resilience in Sri Lanka. In this context, I am pleased to inform you that India will provide a comprehensive assistance package."



## ON CAMERA, LORD VISHNU STATUE DESTROYED IN CAMBODIA, ALLEGEDLY BY THAILAND

**Diary Times Desk :** As the conflict between Thailand and Cambodia drags on, a Cambodian official has accused Bangkok of destroying a statue of Lord Vishnu in a disputed border area. According to a report by news agency AFP, Preah Vihear's spokesperson Lim Chanpanha said that the statue was located inside the Cambodian territory in the An Ses area. Chanpanha said the demolition of the Vishnu statue, built in 2014, took place on Monday, about 100 metres (328 feet) from the border with Thailand.

"We condemn the destruction of ancient temples and statues that are worshipped by Buddhist and Hindu followers," Chanpanha said. Thai authorities have not yet responded to this incident. Videos showing the demolition of the Vishnu statue using a backhoe loader have gone viral on social media. AFP reported that there were no signs of artificial intelligence (AI) manipulation in the viral video. A media representative at the Indian embassy in Bangkok told the news agency that New Delhi had not yet issued a response regarding the incident.

## REMOVE HER, OR WILL SET OFFICE ON FIRE: GLOBAL TV BANGLADESH CHIEF THREATENED

**Diary Times Desk :** Days after the offices of prominent Bangladeshi newspapers were attacked, triggering global condemnation, another media house has been threatened, adding to the pressure on the free press. Earlier this week, several youths visited the office of Global TV Bangladesh in Dhaka and demanded the removal of its head of news, Naznin Munni, failing which it would meet the fate of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star. The youths claimed that Naznin, a popular TV anchor, was an Awami League supporter. While the youths claimed to be members of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, which led the protests last year, the outfit has distanced itself from the incident. The outfit's president, Rifat Rashid, said action would be taken against the members. The incident happened on December 21, three days after the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star were vandalised and set on fire as Bangladesh witnessed another round of unrest following the death of anti-India youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi. In a post on Facebook, the journalist said 7-8 people came to the Global TV office in Tejgaon and issued the warning. She said the threat was part of a wider pattern.

**HANWHA OCEAN AND HYUNDAI E&C SECURE MAJOR OFFSHORE WIND PROJECT**

**Diary Times Desk :** Hanwha Ocean, Hyundai E&C win offshore wind project to build a large power farm in the sea, securing an engineering, procurement, and construction contract. This major move marked the formal entry of Hanwha Ocean into the offshore wind power sector. The company secured a big contract to design, buy materials, and build the project. As per a report by Pulse, the English service of Maeil Business News Korea, the companies signed the agreement on Tuesday. The total value of the entire project reached 2.64 trillion won (USD 1.79 billion). This amount is equal to about 1.80 billion dollars. Hanwha Ocean took a large portion of this work. The company announced that "Hanwha Ocean's share of the contract amounts to 1.97 trillion won." The work focused on a specific plan called the Shinan-Ui offshore wind project. This project involved the building of a 390-megawatt wind farm. The farm sat in the waters southeast of Uido Island. This island is located in Sinan County within the South Jeolla Province. The project aimed to use the wind over the ocean to create clean electricity for the region.

**SHANKH AIR PLANS TO START FLIGHTS IN Q1 2026**

**Diary Times Desk :** Shankh Air, which has received no-objection certificate from the civil aviation ministry, plans to start services in the first quarter of 2026. In a statement on Wednesday, Shankh Aviation said its aircraft are currently undergoing technical reviews and are being readied for delivery to India.

Uttar Pradesh-based Shankh Aviation will be operating Shankh Air. Shankh Aviation's Chairman and Managing Director Sharvan Kumar Vishwakarma met Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu on Monday and briefed about the airline's plans. According to Vishwakarma, the airline plans to launch its flight services around the first quarter of 2026. He also said the company aims to scale up its fleet to 20-25 aircraft over the next two to three years. The minister assured full cooperation from the ministry and the DGCA to ensure that necessary procedures are completed in a time-bound manner, enabling the airline to begin operations smoothly, as per the statement.

**STOCK MARKETS END LOWER IN VOLATILE TRADE**

**Diary Times Desk :** Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower in a volatile trade on Wednesday as trading volumes remained subdued amid the year-end holiday-shortened week and mixed trends in global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 116.14 points, or 0.14 per cent, to settle at 85,408.70. During the day, it hit a high of 85,738.18 and a low of 85,342.19. The 50-share NSE Nifty edged lower by 35.05 points, or 0.13 per cent, to 26,142.10. From the 30-Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints, Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, and Tata Steel were among the biggest laggards. However, Trent, UltraTech Cement, Maruti, and Power Grid were among the gainers. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225 index ended lower while Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in positive territory. European markets were trading marginally higher. US markets ended higher on Tuesday. "Indian equities moved largely sideways in a holiday-shortened week, with trading volumes remaining subdued as the year draws to a close—a trend mirrored across broader Asian markets. The RBI's recently announced liquidity initiatives, including OMOs and a USD/INR buy-sell swap, are expected to improve systemic liquidity and help stabilise currency volatility," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

**QCI ROLLS OUT SYSTEM-WIDE QUALITY REFORMS ACROSS HEALTHCARE, MSMES AND LABS**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Quality Council of India (QCI) announced a comprehensive set of next-generation quality reforms on Wednesday, the eve of Sushasan Divas 2025, aimed at strengthening India's quality ecosystem and advancing the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Drawing on operational experience and evolving stakeholder needs, the reforms aim to have a transformative impact across sectors such as healthcare, laboratories, MSMEs, and manufacturing, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a statement. System-wide reforms to power the quality ecosystem include the unveiling of the Q Mark – Desh ka Haq, a QR-coded mark of Quality to enable citizens to know their laboratory, hospital and MSME, ensuring full disclosure and eliminating fake certificates, it added. QCI is also launching Quality Setu, a secure ticket-based system for time-bound grievance redressal and feedback resolution. A single, paperless, modular one-stop accreditation platform will be launched to replace multiple accreditation portals. For industry and MSMEs, the reforms focus on empowering India's economic backbone of over six crore MSMEs.

**RUPEE FALLS 16 PAISE TO CLOSE AT 89.79 AGAINST US DOLLAR**

**Diary Times Desk :** The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day lower by 16 paise at 89.79 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, fuelled by persistent capital withdrawals from foreign investors, alongside heightened greenback demand from bullion importers. Forex traders said that despite the central bank's announcement of USDINR swaps and Open Market Operations (OMO), the measures failed to boost market sentiments, amid strong dollar demand and rising crude oil prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 89.56 against the US dollar, then touched an intra-day high of 89.51, registering a 12-paise gain from its previous close. At the end of the trading session on Wednesday, the rupee pared its initial gains and was quoted at 89.79 (provisional), down 16 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee settled at 89.63 against the US dollar. The decline in the USD-INR pair was driven by a shift toward risk aversion, fuelled by persistent capital withdrawals from foreign investors leading up to the holiday break, alongside heightened greenback demand from bullion importers, said Dilip Parmar, Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. "Despite the central bank's announcement of USDINR swaps and Open Market Operations (OMO), the measures failed to ignite market enthusiasm as they did little to bridge the widening gap between dollar supply and demand ahead of year-end," Parmar noted.



**INDIA MUST ACCELERATE DEEP MANUFACTURING TO BUILD RESILIENCE AGAINST TARIFFS AND EXPORT PRESSURE: GTRI**

**Diary Times Desk :** Deep manufacturing must become India's core economic strategy over the next five years to sustain growth, boost exports and navigate an increasingly protectionist global trade environment, economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Founder Ajay Srivastava told ANI on Wednesday.

"Deep manufacturing means more employment. That means more equitable growth and more exports. Just export growth through deep manufacturing is the panacea for the country. It should be the mantra for the country for the next five years," Srivastava said in an exclusive interview with ANI. He said the best approach is to focus inward over the next half-decade and promote deep manufacturing in the country. "We have the capability to make almost every product, but we are not making most of them... Recall how China did it," he said.

"By focusing on manufacturing... they could sell to the whole world. India has to follow the same path, he added.

**ANGEL ONE REASSURES BUSINESS CONTINUITY RESILIENCE WITH ISO 22301:2019 CERTIFICATION**

**Diary Times Desk :** Angel One Limited, a leading Fintech player, announced that it has been awarded the ISO 22301:2019 certification by Intertek, a globally recognised and independent certification body. ISO 22301 is the international standard for business continuity and management systems. The certification provides assurance to the stakeholders, that Angel One has robust frameworks in place to anticipate, manage, and recover from operational disruptions--ensuring continuity of critical services across market volatility, technology incidents, and external shocks. For a digital-first financial platform operating at scale, Business continuity is central to investor trust and market integrity. The certification validates Angel One's structured approach to risk assessment, incident response, recovery planning, and governance across its technology infrastructure, core operations, and third-party dependencies. At Angel One, the focus goes beyond market access.

**DELHI METRO EXPANSION TO BOOST 'EASE OF LIVING' IN NATIONAL CAPITAL: PM MODI**

**Diary Times Desk :** Delhi Metro's Phase V(A) Project will expand the National capital's metro network, thus boosting 'ease of living' and reducing congestion, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. Taking it to a social media post on X, PM Modi said, "Delhi's infrastructure gets a major boost! Cabinet's approval for three new corridors as part of Delhi Metro's Phase V(A) Project will expand our capital's metro network, thus boosting 'Ease of Living' and reducing congestion." The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved three new corridors, namely R.K Ashram Marg to Indraprastha (9.913 Kms); Aerocity to IGD Airport T-1 (2.263 kms); Tughlakabad to Kalindi Kunj (3.9 kms) as part of Delhi Metro's Phase - V(A) project consisting of 16.076 kms. Under the approved plan, 13 new stations including 10 underground and 3 elevated, will be constructed over a project duration of three years. Total project cost is Rs 12014.91 crore, which will be sourced from Government of India, Government of Delhi, and international funding agencies, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said while announcing the Cabinet decision earlier in the day.

**CENTRE CLEARS ENTRY FOR NEW AIRLINES, 3 PLAYERS RECEIVE NOCS: CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER**

**Diary Times Desk :** Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu on Wednesday said the government has cleared the way for new airlines, a development coming after a series of meetings with the aspiring players. In a post on X, the Minister said he met teams from Shankh Air, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress over the past week.

"Over the last one week, pleased to have met teams from new airlines aspiring to take wings in Indian skies--Shankh Air, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress. While Shankh Air has already got the no objection certificate (NOC) from the ministry, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress have received their NOCs this week," Naidu said. The Minister said the government is encouraging more airlines to enter the Indian aviation sector, which he described as one of the fastest-growing aviation markets in the world due to the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"It has been endeavour of the ministry to encourage more airlines in Indian Aviation which is amongst the fastest growing aviation markets in the world owing to the policies of the government of Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi ji. Schemes like UDAN, has enabled smaller carriers Star Air, India One Air, Fly91 etc. to play an important role in the regional connectivity within the country and there is more scope for further growth," the Aviation Minister added. The development comes a week after disruptions caused by the cancellation of over 4,000 IndiGo flights in the first week of December. The cancellations were linked to difficulties in implementing new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms. Speaking to ANI earlier, Naidu said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation introduced the new FDTL regulations from November 1 and that the Ministry had been engaging with airlines on the issue for at least six months. "From November 1, the DGCA came up with new FDTL regulations. The Ministry also initiated a continuous engagement process with the airlines for at least 6 months. Previously, there was no issue regarding the new FDTL norm. Other airlines, including Air India and SpiceJet, have adjusted," he said.



## TWO-MONTH NIGHT BAN IMPOSED ON MINING IN BADDI-BAROTIWALA- NALAGARH BELT

**Diary Times Desk :** In a bid to avert threats to law and order posed by the unauthorised mining mafia, the District Magistrate (DM) has banned all mining activities from 7 pm to 7 am in the Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh belt for two months. Excavation, transportation of mined material and movement of vehicles have also been prohibited during these hours as a preventive measure, according to a notification issued on December 20. The Baddi SP and the SDMs of Nalagarh and Baddi have been directed to ensure effective implementation of the order and take necessary steps to maintain peace and tranquility. Any violation will invite punitive action. The move follows reports of persistent illegal mining and unauthorised transportation, particularly at night and especially near the inter-state border. Porous stretches along riverbeds, khads and rivulets have reportedly enabled easy cross-border movement.

## STATE EDGES CLOSER TO BECOMING FOREMOST NATURAL FARMING HUB: CM

**Diary Times Desk :** Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today said Himachal Pradesh is moving towards becoming country's foremost natural farming hub by ensuring economic empowerment of farmers and rural households. The Chief Minister said the state government is prioritising and strengthening rural economy with bold reforms. "Recognising the pivotal role of the rural population in Himachal's economy, the state government has accorded top priority to strengthen the rural economy by promoting natural farming as a cornerstone of inclusive and sustainable growth," he said. Sukhu today said that agriculture continues to be the backbone of the state, with nearly 90 per cent of the population residing in rural areas and about 53.95 per cent directly dependent on farming and allied activities.

"The state government has set an ambitious target of bringing 9.61 lakh farmer families under the ambit of natural farming which reaffirms its strong commitment to transforming the rural economy and securing a sustainable livelihood for farmers across the state," he said.

## HC SUSPENDS LIFE SENTENCE OF EX-HIMACHAL POLICE IG ZAIDI IN CUSTODIAL DEATH OF ACCUSED IN MINOR GANG-RAPE CASE

**Diary Times Desk :** The Punjab and Haryana High Court has suspended the life imprisonment of former Himachal Pradesh IGP Zahir Haider Zaidi in the 2017 custodial death case of an accused in the gang rape and murder of a girl in the hill state. Zaidi, along with seven other policemen, was awarded life imprisonment by a special CBI court in Chandigarh in January in the custodial death case of Suraj, who was found dead at the Kotkhai police station in Himachal Pradesh on July 18, 2017. A 16-year-old girl went missing in Kotkhai on July 4, 2017, and her body was found in the Halaila forests on July 6. The post-mortem report confirmed rape and murder. Amid huge public outcry in the state, a special investigation team (SIT) headed by Zaidi was constituted. Suraj was among six people arrested by the SIT.



## MAN KILLED, 5 INJURED IN LEOPARD ATTACK IN HIMACHAL'S MANDI

**Diary Times Desk :** Panic gripped Balh Ghati in Mandi district on Wednesday morning after a leopard attacked people at three different locations, killing one person and injuring five others before being shot dead by locals. According to officials, the leopard carried out attacks at Chandiyal, Bhadyal and Malwana villages. The first attack was reported from Chandiyal, after which the animal moved to Bhadyal, where it injured several people. The final and fatal attack occurred at Malwana village, where a 40-year-old man was mauled to death. The deceased has been identified as Balveer Singh, a resident of Bholi village. He was reportedly a migrant worker residing in Mandi and had come to visit relatives in the area. The injured have been identified as Sahib Singh, a resident of Bihar; Dinanath from Bhadyal; Champa Devi from Malwana; Janit from Bhadyal; and Rekha Devi, also from Bhadyal. All injured have been admitted to Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Government Medical College and Hospital, Nerchowk. Following the attacks, fear spread across the region, with residents coming out of their homes armed with sticks and sharp implements to protect themselves and drive away the animal. The leopard reportedly attempted to attack again, after which villagers managed to kill it.

## HIMACHAL'S HEALTH SYSTEM IN SHAMBLES: LEADER OF OPPOSITION

**Diary Times Desk :** Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur today warned that the recent assault at Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC) is a serious warning to the government on the deteriorating health facilities in the state. In a statement issued here today, he said the state's health system is in shambles with the general public bearing the direct brunt of it. "Hospital chaos, overcrowding, lack of security, excessive workload, and administrative negligence are leading to such incidents," he remarked. He said the government should learn from this incident and take concrete steps, not just rhetoric. "The government should prioritise health services, immediately fill vacant positions, strengthen security in hospitals, ensure uninterrupted supply of medicines, equipment and work honestly to ensure that the benefits of central government schemes like Himcare and Ayushman reach the common man," the former chief minister stressed. Expressing deep concern over the state's deteriorating health system, he said the government needs to work with sincerity to improve health facilities in the state. "Today, the situation is such that the entire health system in the state has completely collapsed, and the general public is bearing the direct brunt of it.

## YOUR HOROSCOPE 25-12-2025

### Aries

Today, you will meet old friends, which will refresh old memories. Employed people may be fired from the job due to heavy arguments with colleagues in the workplace. People doing business should thank God for getting financial benefits from the advice of their spouse. Due to irritation in the eyes, you should consult an ophthalmologist.

### Taurus

Today you will get success as your long pending legal proceedings will come in your favor. There will be an atmosphere of happiness in the family as employed people will get progress in their workplace. People doing business should make a budget and spend the money in order to get financial benefits. Housewives should change their food according to health and season.

### Gemini

Today you should include yoga and meditation in your daily routine. For employed people, your responsibilities may increase due to promotion in the workplace. People doing business may suffer financial loss from any unknown person today. There may be difficulty in walking due to nerve pain problems.

### Cancer

Today you will get relief from all your problems due to sudden financial gain. Employed people may have to get scolded by their boss due to being hasty in the workplace. People doing business may face increased difficulties in business due to arguments with business partners. As the problem of foot pain increases, you must consult a specialist doctor.

### Leo

Today, you should offer water to Lord Shiva to avoid difficulties. A heated argument with HR in the workplace will spoil your whole day. Businessmen have to exercise patience, there are chances of improvement in business. Today, you may face stomach and pancreas problems due to eating too much fried food.

### Virgo

Today you should take special control over your speech and behavior. People in employment will get success in the workplace with the help of friends. People doing business will get financial gain due to some special offer, your financial condition will be strengthened. Old diseases of elders in the house may emerge.

### Libra

Today is going to be a busy day for you. Employed people will get a chance to work with senior officers due to advancement in their professional field. People doing business should avoid exchanging money with any unknown person today. Pregnant women may have to face problems due to changing weather.

### Scorpio

Today you may have to face huge arguments in your family over small matters. Employed people may have to face mental problems due to extra workload in the workplace. People doing business may have to travel abroad in connection with business expansion. Diabetic patients should get themselves checked by a doctor in case of any problem today.

### Sagittarius

Today you should take all important decisions of your career thoughtfully. Employed people may have to face some problems due to the start of a new job in the workplace. Due to financial gain for business people, you can invest in a new business. Problems like leg pain and headache may bother you.

### Capricorn

Today you can invest especially in land and buildings. Employed people may have to travel long distances due to office work, due to which your health may deteriorate. People doing business may face difficulties in repaying business loans due to loss of money. High BP and cholesterol problems will increase the problems of your spouse.

### Aquarius

Today you may have to face huge arguments in your family over small matters. Employees will be suspended due to indiscipline in the workplace. People doing business should solve all the problems of their customers in time. Due to worsening weather, problems related to cold and cough may increase in the family.

### Pisces

Today your interest in creative work will especially increase. Employed people may be given an important project by their boss to handle important projects in the workplace. People doing business should control their speech and behavior with their customers. You should walk carefully on the road, problems may arise due to injury.



## 3 MORE ARRESTS MADE IN KAITHAL DOUBLE MURDER CASE

**Diary Times Desk :** Kaithal police have arrested three more persons in connection with the double murder case over an old land dispute in Pai village. The accused have been identified as Kuldeep, a resident of village Bahu in Jhajjar district, Ravinder alias Ravi from village Behla in Rewari district, and Sunny, a resident of village Kakaut in Kaithal district. They were arrested on December 22 and were produced in the court on December 23, from where Kuldeep was sent to judicial custody, and remaining two were taken on police remand till December 26. Earlier, Rahul and Vijay, both residents of Pai, had surrendered at Pundri police station on December 20 and they were taken on police remand till December 26, said DSP Gurvinder Singh. Giving further details, DSP Singh said that as per the complaint of Tejender alias Teji, a resident of Pai, there had been an old land dispute between his family and Chela Ram's family from the same village for the past 14-15 years. Due to this rivalry, a clash in 2012 resulted in the death of two members of Chela Ram's family, including Rajbir and Fakir Chand, for which family members of Tejender were convicted. In 2018, they were released on bail by the High Court.

## NO JUSTIFICATION FOR FORCE ON HAU STUDENTS: COMMISSIONER'S INQUIRY

**Diary Times Desk :** The Divisional Commissioner, Hisar, in his inquiry report into the lathicharge on students of Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (HAU), Hisar, has concluded that there was "no justification" for ordering or permitting the use of force by university security personnel on the campus. The report states that the lathicharge was prima facie disproportionate to the situation prevailing at the time and has recommended a detailed inquiry to fix accountability for the incident.

The HAU had witnessed a prolonged agitation in June this year after university security personnel resorted to lathicharge on June 10, 2025, when students were protesting over scholarship-related issues. Several students were injured in the incident, triggering widespread outrage on the campus.

## HIGH COURT ORDERS IMMEDIATE HALT TO TREE FELLING ACROSS PUNJAB, CITES 'BLATANT VIOLATION' OF GREEN POLICY

**Diary Times Desk :** Acting on a bunch of petitions filed in public interest, the Punjab and Haryana High Court Wednesday directed that trees would not be axed across Punjab. The bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry also asked the state counsel to forthwith inform authorities concerned to halt the tree felling process. In one of the petitions, Mohali resident Praneet Kaur challenged the large-scale, imminent and ongoing felling and uprooting of mature trees on public non-forest land in the area by Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) for infrastructure projects. Appearing before the Bench, counsel Jatin Bansal contended that the action was in blatant violation of the Tree Preservation Policy for Non-Forest Government and Public Lands, 2024, and settled principles of environmental law. Bansal contended that the forest and green cover in the state was critically low. GMADA's own stand was that alternative land was unavailable for compensatory plantation. Yet, the authority proceeded with predetermined directions for removal of 251 trees without conducting prior environmental appraisal, scientific tree census, biodiversity assessment, or identification of plantation sites.



## PUNJAB CM RELEASES RS 69 CRORE TO UPGRADE STATE MEDICAL COLLEGES

**Diary Times Desk :** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday ordered the immediate release of Rs 68.98 crore to upgrade facilities at four premier medical colleges in the state.

Chairing a review meeting of the Medical Education and Research Department here, the Chief Minister said that strengthening infrastructure and diagnostic facilities at government medical colleges was essential to ensure quality health care for people.

"The need of the hour is to equip these institutes with high-end, world-class machinery so that they can serve patients more effectively," Mann said. As per the allocation, Rs 26.53 crore has been sanctioned for Government Medical College, Amritsar; Rs 28.51 crore for Government Medical College, Patiala; Rs 9.43 crore for Dr BR Ambedkar Institute of Medical Sciences, Mohali; and Rs 4.51 crore for the PGI Satellite Centre, Ferozepur.

The Chief Minister directed that the funds be utilised promptly for development works and procurement of modern medical equipment in the larger public interest.

## OLYMPIC MEDALLIST MANU BHAKER ENROLLS IN IIM ROHTAK'S SPORTS MANAGEMENT DIPLOMA

**Diary Times Desk :** Olympic medallist pistol shooter Manu Bhaker has enrolled as a participant in the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Rohtak's Post Graduate Diploma in Sports Management for Executives. IIM Rohtak inaugurated the seventh batch of the 16-month programme recently, welcoming a new cohort that includes national and international sportspersons alongside working professionals and sports enthusiasts. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Shyam Singh Yadav, former international sportsperson, international coach and Member of Parliament, as guest of honour. Addressing the gathering, Prof. Dheeraj Sharma, Director, IIM Rohtak, underlined the institute's larger vision of strengthening India's sports ecosystem by building capable, ethical and future-ready sports professionals. "Bhaker's enrolment adds fresh momentum to the programme's practitioner-driven approach. She has got admission after fulfilling the prerequisite criteria of IIM Rohtak which require written tests, interviews and other mandatory norms," he added.

## SGPC ADDS ANOTHER ROADBLOCK TO HERITAGE STREET PROJECT IN ANANDPUR SAHIB; RS 25 CR BUDGET TO LAPSE IF WORK DOESN'T START BY DEC 31



**Diary Times Desk :** After objecting to a gate planned for Heritage Street in Anandpur, the SGPC has added another spoke to a project planned by the tourism department of the government in the Holy City. The manager of the Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib in Anandpur Sahib wrote a letter to the government on December 22, a copy of which was available with The Tribune, stating that the work on Heritage Street should not be started as it would cause inconvenience to devotees coming to the Holy City. Just two days prior, the Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Kuldeep Singh Gargaj, had objected to the gate proposed at the start of Heritage Street, claiming that it would hinder the view of Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib.

The tourism department had recently started work on laying the Heritage Street in Anandpur Sahib, but the contractors' workers were stopped from doing the work by SGPC employees. Sources here said that since the government does not want a direct confrontation with the SGPC over the issue, the tourism department officials were in a fix over the work.

Highly placed sources in the tourism department told The Tribune that the Rs 25 crore budget sanctioned by the government for laying the Heritage Street in Anandpur Sahib would lapse if the work was not started before December 31.

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 spyops 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.

INFA

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.

## A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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



Tamilis, 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.



## AN 80-YEAR SEARCH FOR ART STOLEN BY THE NAZIS

**Diary Times Desk :** Simon Goodman has become an art detective, restitution expert and author while tracking down nearly 470 works that belonged to his grandparents in interwar Amsterdam. Read an excerpt from his writing chronicling the quest to recover his family's collection

Amongst Amsterdam's interwar art collectors, few rivalled Friedrich 'Fritz' Bernhard Eugen Gutmann and his wife, Louise Gutmann. The scion of a German banking family of Jewish descent, Fritz Gutmann used the profits from his thriving business in Amsterdam to collect widely, including works by Lucas Cranach the Elder, Frans Hals, Hieronymus Bosch and Edgar Degas. But when the German army invaded the Netherlands in 1940, Nazi officials helped themselves to the Gutmanns' treasures.

The story of the Gutmanns is one of many prominent Jewish families in Amsterdam whose prized art and heirlooms were looted by the Nazis from 1938 to 1945. Lost Amsterdam, an interactive tour published by Christie's Restitution Department, traces the legacy of Nazi-era and World War II art theft and dispossession in the city.

Fritz and Louise Gutmann were killed in the concentration camps in 1944. Their descendants, including their grandson Simon Goodman, have tirelessly fought to recover the couple's stolen art, since scattered throughout public and private collections around the world. In his books *The Orpheus Clock* (Scribner/Simon & Schuster, 2015) and the forthcoming *The Prince Vanishes*, Goodman recounts his family's story, which includes the first Nazi looting case settled in the United States and the first major restitution in the Netherlands since the post-war era.

When World War I broke out in 1914, Friedrich Bernhard Eugen 'Fritz' Gutmann was the director of the Dresdner Bank in London. Because of his German citizenship, he was interned in the Isle of Man camp and was finally released by the British in 1917. The prisoner exchange took place in neutral Rotterdam. Reunited after three years with his wife, Louise, and his son, Bernhard, the family moved to Amsterdam, where they settled by the bucolic Vondelpark, at Koningslaan 19.



## JEWELS BY JAR: A COLLECTING GUIDE

**Diary Times Desk :**

There's no shop sign or window display at 7 Place Vendôme in Paris — nothing that hints at the brilliance within, beyond three discreet letters, JAR. Yet for jewellery collectors, this is a place of pilgrimage: the store of the acclaimed contemporary jewellery designer Joel Arthur Rosenthal.

Born in New York City in 1943, Rosenthal graduated in art history and philosophy at Harvard before moving to Paris. There, he opened a needlepoint shop, where his experiments with unusual colours of yarn attracted the custom of designers for Hermès and Valentino. After working with Bulgari in New York, he returned to Paris, opening his own jewellery store with his partner, Pierre Jeannet, in 1977.

JAR, as he is generally known, is celebrated for his creativity and craftsmanship. He pairs unusual gemstones with non-traditional materials and has a daring way with colour and proportion. The quality of his work recalls the jewellery of the 18th and 19th centuries. In 2013, he was the first living 'artist of gems' to be honoured with a retrospective at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Producing fewer than 100 pieces a year, JAR creates jewels of unusual dynamism and architectural depth, making him a favourite with style icons, tastemakers and collectors. 'Each piece is unique and is a bond between JAR and its new owner,' says François Curiel, chairman of Christie's Europe, Middle East and Africa, and a longtime acquaintance of the designer. This rarity, combined with his unparalleled artistry and exclusivity, solidifies JAR's status as a leading figure in the world of fine jewellery.'

It was JAR's blockbuster exhibition at London's Somerset House in 2002 that placed him in the consciousness of fashionable women everywhere. To thank the 145 clients who loaned jewels for the 400-piece show, he sent each one a pair of 'Pansy' earrings in coloured aluminium.

The gift was symbolic: the French word for pansy — pensée — also translates as 'thought', and the motif is traditionally used in French jewellery to indicate thoughtfulness. JAR made an additional 1,000 pairs for purchase by visitors to the exhibition; they were snapped up within days.



## BARCELONA IDENTIFY THREE AREAS THEY NEED REINFORCE IN THE SUMMER OF 2026



**Diary Times Desk :** With the January transfer window just around the corner, Barcelona remain undecided as to whether or not they should sign a defender to replace the injured Andreas Christensen.

They are, however, sure of bringing in significant reinforcements for the summer of 2026, as part of yet another mini-overhaul. It is no secret that Barcelona will hunt for a new centre-back in the summer of 2026, especially if they fail to sign a single player in January. But beyond a centre-back, it appears Barcelona have drawn up a list of priorities for the summer. According to La Vanguardia, Hansi Flick, along with the Barcelona sporting committee led by sporting director Deco, have identified a list of priorities for the summer of 2026. The absolute top priority for Barcelona is to sign a centre-back, which is hardly surprising given Christensen's injury woes and Ronald Araujo's lack of performances. Not to mention, Barça are still yet to replace Iñigo Martínez.

### BARCELONA PRESIDENT TO MEET WITH SUPERAGENT DURING DUBAI TRIP FOR AWARD CEREMONY

**Diary Times Desk :** A new development off the pitch could have important implications for Barcelona as the January transfer window approaches.

According to a recent report from SPORT, club president Joan Laporta is set to travel to Dubai this weekend, where he is expected to hold a face-to-face meeting with super agent Jorge Mendes.

Interestingly, Laporta's trip is officially linked to the Globe Soccer Awards, a prestigious gala in which Barcelona will have a strong presence. As such, Lamine Yamal is set to receive a major individual award, while the Barcelona women's team will also be recognised for their achievements. However, beyond the celebrations, the timing of Laporta's presence in Dubai has inevitably fuelled speculation. It is said that Laporta plans to use the trip to meet with Jorge Mendes, a figure who continues to hold considerable influence around the Globe Soccer Awards. With the January transfer market approaching and Barcelona dealing with uncertainty in defence following Andreas Christensen's injury, the meeting has been interpreted as potentially more than a courtesy encounter.

### OFFICIAL: BARCELONA'S FLICK, LAMINE NOMINATED FOR LA LIGA AWARDS FOR DECEMBER

**Diary Times Desk :** FC Barcelona ended their 2025 with a 2-0 victory over Villarreal away at Estadio de La Ceramica, maintaining their advantage at the top of the La Liga table.

It meant that the Blaugrana have now racked up eight wins in a row in the league, four of which came in the month of December.

Given their excellent run of results in the league, it does not come as a surprise to see Barcelona being represented in the nominees for the La Liga awards for this month.

Indeed, Barcelona manager Hansi Flick finds himself in contention for the La Liga Coach of the Month award for December. After all, the German tactician masterminded four victories in four games, starting with Atlético Madrid and then beating Real Betis and Osasuna, before ending the year with the win over Villarreal. Flick minds himself up against Celta Vigo head coach Claudio Giraldez and RCD Espanyol manager Manolo González for the prize. Meanwhile, Barcelona teenage superstar Lamine Yamal is in the running to win the La Liga Player of the Month for December.

## BARCELONA WILL NOT RUSH INTO HURRIED DECISIONS OVER JANUARY TRANSFER PLANS

**Diary Times Desk :** Much has already been said about Barcelona and their urgency to sign a low-cost defender in the January transfer window following the injury to Andreas Christensen. However, a recent report from AS has brought important clarity to the situation, confirming that the club is deliberately taking a calm and measured approach rather than rushing into the market.

According to the report, Barcelona have no intention of making a snap decision in January. The club understand that the winter window is notoriously difficult, especially when it comes to defenders who can make an immediate impact. Panic buys rarely work, and the sporting department is keen to avoid repeating past mistakes that have added little value to the squad. AS explains that Barça currently have a 20-day period to fully assess and process Christensen's long-term injury. If it is officially confirmed that the Danish centre-back will be sidelined for four to five months, the club would then be allowed, under La Liga regulations, to use up to 80% of his salary margin.



### ESPAÑOL STAR READY FOR 'SPECIAL MATCH' AGAINST BARCELONA: "MORE THAN JUST THREE POINTS"

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona will kickstart their 2026 with the big one as they take on Espanyol in a highly anticipated Catalan derby. The tension and the emotion will be up a notch, especially after Barcelona poached Espanyol's star player Joan García last summer.

Heading into this crucial match-up, Espanyol forward Roberto Fernández talked about the significance of the Catalan derby and how his team is preparing for this game. Fernández, who is Espanyol's second-highest scorer with four goals this season, said they are ready for this big outing.

"We are preparing for the derby with enthusiasm and confidence," he said (h/t Mundo Deportivo) before highlighting how the Catalans derby is different from any other game.

"We know that it is a special match, different from all the matches, the derby is more than just three points, the people live it a lot, and we want to give them that joy," he added. Formerly of Braga, Fernández will play a key role for Espanyol, as he will be tasked with the responsibility of breaking apart a Barcelona defence that has looked susceptible to good counters.

### BARCELONA DRAW LINE IN SAND OVER CENTRE-BACK SIGNING

**Diary Times Desk :** According to a report from SPORT, Barcelona have taken a strong stance in their search for defensive reinforcements.

As such, they have decided that the club will not spend money in January on a centre-back whose contract expires at the end of the season.

Barcelona are currently going through a delicate and complex situation. While the need for defensive cover has been acknowledged, the club is determined not to act in haste. Instead, Barça are carefully assessing market opportunities, particularly players who could arrive on a short-term loan for six months, even if that deal does not include a purchase option. It is said that Barcelona will not commit transfer funds to players who have only six months remaining on their contracts. From the club's perspective, paying a fee now for a footballer who could be signed for free in June simply does not make financial sense, especially given the current economic reality at the club. It must be noted that several high-profile defenders find themselves in this contract situation.