

## NEWS IN BRIEF

10.56 LAKH NAMES DELETED AS EC RELEASES ASSAM'S DRAFT ELECTORAL ROLLS AFTER SPECIAL REVISION

### Diary Times Desk :

The names of 10.56 lakh voters have been deleted after Special Revision of electoral rolls in Assam, where assembly polls would be in less than six months. According to the integrated draft rolls released by the Election Commission on Saturday, the state has a total of 2,51,09,754 voters, excluding 93,021 D-Voters or doubtful voters. Additionally, the names of 10,56,291 voters have been deleted due to death, shifting, or multiple entries. D-Voters are a category of voters in Assam who have been disenfranchised by the government on account of their alleged lack of proper citizenship credentials. D-Voters are determined by special tribunals under the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the person declared as a D-Voter is not given a voter card. All related particulars, such as name, age and photograph, of D-Voters have been carried forward to the draft electoral roll without any change. The draft rolls were published after house-to-house verification of the Special Revision was held from November 22 to December 20.

**'I WANT JUSTICE,'** WIFE OF INDIAN-ORIGIN MAN WHO DIED IN CANADIAN HOSPITAL WAITING TRIAGE

**Diary Times Desk :** Wife of a 44-year-old Indian-origin man who died due to suspected cardiac arrest awaiting treatment for over eight hours at a Canadian hospital wants to see staff at the facility held accountable, a media report has said. On Saturday, an Indian community leader drew attention to the inadequacy of hospital beds in Canada leading to a late triage that resulted in the death of Prashant Sreekumar at Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton, capital of Alberta province in northwest Canada.

Prashant, an accountant, was taken to the hospital after he experienced severe chest pains while at work on December 22. At the hospital, he was checked in at triage and then made to sit in the waiting room. Hospital staff did an electrocardiogram (ECG), offered him some Tylenol for his pain, but kept him waiting.

## PM MODI NEWS

### PRESIDENT MURMU, PM MODI PAY TRIBUTE TO GURU GOBIND SINGH ON PRAKASH PURAB



**Diary Times Desk :** President Droupadi Murmu and PM Narendra Modi led the nation in greeting people on the sacred occasion of Prakash Purab of Guru Gobind Singh.

"Warm greetings on the Prakash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji! He inspired people to live righteously, welding followers into a force that bravely faced adversaries to protect justice and self-respect."

He symbolises grace amidst adversities and sacrifice for ideals. May his teachings guide humanity towards a harmonious society based on unity, compassion, and respect," said President Murmu in a post on X.

PM Modi wrote, "On the sacred Parkash Utsav, we bow to Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, an embodiment of courage, compassion, and sacrifice. His life and teachings inspire us to stand for truth, justice, and human dignity. His vision guides generations towards service and selfless duty."

He also shared pictures from his visit to Takht Sri Harmandir Ji Patna Sahib earlier this year, where he also had darshan of the Holy Jore Sahib of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Kaur.

BJP president JP Nadda and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge also greeted people on the occasion.

## IGMC SHIMLA

### SHIMLA DOCTOR'S TERMINATION SPARKS INDEFINITE STRIKE, HALTING MEDICAL CARE IN HIMACHAL'S IGMC



**Diary Times Desk :** Medical services, barring emergency care, were severely affected across several government hospitals in Himachal Pradesh on Saturday as resident doctors went on an indefinite strike to protest the termination of a doctor accused of assaulting a patient.

Patients and their attendants, particularly those travelling from remote areas, faced major difficulties due to the unavailability of doctors. "I came here on Thursday from Ani, about 125 kilometres from Shimla, for my father's treatment. But doctors are unavailable because of the strike, and we are facing inconvenience," said Krishan Singh Thakur, an attendant.

He added that peak winter cold and the lack of accommodation due to the heavy tourist rush around the New Year had compounded their problems. Thakur urged the government and doctors to resolve the issue at the earliest in the interest of patients. Resident doctors of Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC), Shimla, and several other government hospitals across the state went on mass casual leave on Friday. The Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) announced an indefinite strike from Saturday, stating that routine services, elective surgeries and outpatient departments would remain closed.



### CONGRESS TO LAUNCH 'MGNREGA BACHAO' CAMPAIGN ON JANUARY 5; KHARGE SAYS MODI GOVT WILL FACE PEOPLE'S ANGER

**Diary Times Desk :** The Congress will launch a nationwide campaign against the repeal of the UPA-era rural employment legislation MGNREGA on January 5, similar to the pushback against the three farm laws which eventually forced the Narendra Modi Government to rollback its decision, party president Mallikarjun Kharge said. At a press conference here on Saturday, after a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), Kharge said the party would lead the 'MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan' across the country. The VB-G RAM G Bill, replacing the 20-year-old MGNREGA, was passed in Parliament during the recently concluded Winter Session of Parliament amid vociferous protests by the Opposition. The new law has a provision for 125 days of wage employment for rural workers.

He said the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was not just a scheme, but the 'Right to Work' given by the Constitution. "People are angry over the repeal of MGNREGA. The government will have to face the consequences," he said. "At the CWC meeting, we took an oath that a campaign would be launched with MGNREGA as its focal point. The Congress would take the lead and start a "MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan" from January 5," Kharge said. He said party leaders took an oath of protecting MGNREGA at any cost. "We will fight unitedly for the rights of rural labourers to dignity, employment, wages and timely payment and will protect the rights of demand-based employment and gram sabha," he said. Kharge said the Congress would democratically oppose the "conspiracy" to erase Mahatma Gandhi's name from MGNREGA and to "convert the rights of workers into charity".

### UNNAO RAPE CASE: VICTIM SEEKS FIR AGAINST INVESTIGATING OFFICER FOR 'COLLUDING' WITH SENGAR



**Diary Times Desk :** Crying foul over the Delhi High Court's order granting bail to expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case, the victim on Saturday demanded that the CBI should register an FIR against the then-investigating Officer for being "hand in glove" with Sengar.

Sengar's sentence has been suspended by the High Court till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case. He has challenged a December 2019 trial court verdict in the case. He will, however, remain in jail as he is also serving 10 years' imprisonment in the custodial death case of the victim's father and has not been granted bail in that case. In a six-page complaint, the victim, who was a minor at the time of her rape in 2017, claimed she filed a complaint earlier as well, but no action was taken against the officer. She alleged that she and her family were facing threats from various quarters. The CBI has already moved the Supreme Court against the Delhi High Court's order for suspension of sentence and grant of bail to Sengar in the case during the pendency of his appeal against conviction. In her complaint, she alleged that the investigating Officer (IO) conducted the probe dishonestly.

### 1.56 LAKH DELAYED, 1.12 LAKH HIT BY FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS IN NOVEMBER: DGCA DATA



**Diary Times Desk :** India's domestic aviation market is posting steady passenger growth and healthier load factors, but the latest data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) suggests the boom is riding on fragile operational foundations. Behind the headline numbers lies a month marked by prolonged delays, widespread cancellations and mounting passenger hardship, raising questions over whether airlines are expanding faster than their systems can cope.

DGCA's traffic analysis shows that domestic airlines carried 1,526.35 lakh passengers between January and November 2025, compared to 1,464.02 lakh during the same period last year, registering a growth of 4.26 per cent. November alone recorded a 6.92 per cent rise in passenger traffic. However, the regulator's own data points to a parallel surge in disruption. In November, 1,56,768 passengers were affected by flight delays exceeding two hours, while 1,12,112 passengers suffered due to cancellations. Airlines together spent Rs 210.23 lakh on facilitation for delayed passengers and Rs 40.79 lakh on compensation and facilities linked to cancellations, underlining the scale of inconvenience borne by travellers. IndiGo, the country's largest airline, accounted for the highest number of affected passengers. DGCA figures show that 89,826 passengers were hit by cancellations and 75,150 faced delays beyond two hours during the month. This came even as IndiGo's passenger load factor rose sharply from 82.4 per cent.

### 'SAR TAN SE JUDA' SLOGANS RAISED BY HOSTILE MOB: 38 CHARGE-SHEETED IN SEPTEMBER 26 BAREILLY CLASHES



**Diary Times Desk :** A mob attacked police teams and raised slogans of "sar tan se juda" (beheading) on the directions of cleric Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan during the September 26 violence in Bareilly, the recent chargesheet in this matter stated.

Police have filed fresh chargesheet in connection with the violence in Bareilly, naming 38 persons, including Tauqeer Raza Khan, president of Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC), as the main accused.

According to the chargesheet, the accused attacked police teams at two locations while raising aggressive and provocative slogans following directions from Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan, officials said.

SP Manush Pareek told reporters, "Chargesheets have already been filed in 10 cases related to the violence in the city." In the latest case, registered at the Baradari police station, the accused named in the chargesheet include Tauqeer Raza Khan, Mohammad Azam, Farhat Khan, Moin Khan, Umed, Mustaqim, Arwaaz, Nazim Raza Khan, Mohsin and others.

## SIR HEARINGS BEGIN IN BENGAL, 32 LAKH 'UNMAPPED' VOTERS TO BE COVERED



**Diary Times Desk :** The hearings under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls began in West Bengal on Saturday with people queuing up in front of 3,234 centres across the state, a senior official said. Around 32 lakh "unmapped" voters, those who are unable to establish linkage with the 2002 electoral roll, will be called for hearings in the first phase, he said. Altogether 4,500 micro observers have been engaged for hearings in the first phase, which began at 11 am. Voters can submit any of 12 recognised documents, including Aadhaar, as proof of identity and address, an Election Commission official said. However, the Aadhaar card will not be accepted as a standalone document, he said. Those aged 85 years or above won't have to physically come to the hearing camps as EC officials will undertake the process at their residences, he said. "The hearing process is being conducted under the supervision of over 4,500 micro-observers, with only authorised officials such as EROs, AROs, BLOs and observers permitted at the centres. People are lining up in large numbers before every camp," said the official at the office of the state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

## INDIAN MISSION ESTABLISHES ONE STOP HELP CENTRE FOR DISTRESSED WOMEN IN CANADA

**Diary Times Desk :** The Consulate General of India in Toronto has established a 'One Stop Centre for Women,' a dedicated support centre exclusively to assist women Indian nationals in distress. The Consulate has also set up a 24x7 helpline and said, the new Centre aims to provide critical and timely support to Indian passport holder women who could be facing domestic violence, abuse, family conflict, abandonment, exploitation and legal challenges, among others. The One Stop Centre for Women (OSCW) will provide coordinated, beneficiary-centred assistance by connecting aggrieved women to timely and appropriate pathways of support, including immediate counselling, facilitation of psycho-social support, and coordination of legal assistance and advice, the Indian mission said in a post on X on Friday. This would be done while helping women access relevant community and social-service resources in Canada, it said, adding, "Entire intervention by the OSCW will be within the purview of Local Laws in Canada." The Centre would be run by a woman Centre Administrator, who will ensure the "delivery of safe, dignified, and comprehensive assistance" to women in need (on means tested basis) through prompt handling of distress calls via 24x7 helpline.

## CONGRESS TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN AGAINST MGNREGA REPEAL FROM JANUARY 5



**Diary Times Desk :** The Congress will launch a campaign against the repeal of the UPA-era rural employment legislation MGNREGA on January 5, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge warning that people are angry and the Narendra Modi government will have to face the consequences for the move. The VB-G RAM G Bill, replacing the 20-year-old MGNREGA, was passed in Parliament during the recently concluded Winter Session of Parliament amid vociferous protests by the opposition. The new act has a provision for 125 days of wage employment for rural workers. At a press conference here on Saturday after a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), Kharge said the party will lead the 'MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan' across the country. He said MGNREGA was not just a scheme, but the 'Right to Work' given by the Constitution. "People are angry over the repeal of MGNREGA; the government will have to face the consequences," he said. "At the CWC meeting, we took an oath that a campaign would be launched with MGNREGA as its focal point. The Congress would take the lead and start a 'MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan' from January 5," Kharge said.

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## SC QUASHES RAPE CONVICTION AFTER COMPLAINANT AND ACCUSED MARRY EACH OTHER

**Diary Times Desk :** Noting that the complainant woman and the convict man are living together after getting married, the Supreme Court has quashed the conviction of a man from Madhya Pradesh who was sentenced to 10-year rigorous imprisonment for raping the woman. A Bench of Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice SC Sharma – who said it had 'sixth sense' that the parties could be brought together concluded that it was a consensual relationship that gave it a criminal colour due to some misunderstanding. "We had a sixth sense that the appellant and the respondent prosecutrix could be brought together once again if they decided to marry each other," it said, noting that the parties got married in July 2025 and have been residing together since then. The top court also directed the Chief Medical Officer, Sagar in Madhya Pradesh to revoke the man's suspension and pay the arrears of his salary.

## HALF-METRE CLOTH LEFT IN WOMAN'S ABDOMEN DURING DELIVERY AT GREATER NOIDA HOSPITAL; 6 BOOKED

**Diary Times Desk :** An FIR has been lodged against doctors of a private hospital in Greater Noida, besides senior health officials, after a woman alleged that a half-metre-long surgical cloth had been left inside her abdomen during a delivery procedure in 2023, causing severe pain for nearly one-and-a-half years, police said on Saturday. On a court's directions, the Knowledge Park police station on December 24 registered an FIR against six persons, including doctors Anjana Agarwal and Manish Goyal, Gautam Buddh Nagar Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Narendra Kumar, and health department officials Chandan Soni and Asha Kiran Chaudhary, police said. According to the FIR, the complainant, Anshul Verma, a resident of sector Delta One in Greater Noida, who works as a domestic help and also does sewing and embroidery work for livelihood – alleged she underwent a delivery operation on November 14, 2023, at Bakson Hospital in Tughlakpur, performed by Dr Agarwal. The FIR said, due to negligence during the procedure, approximately half-a-metre of surgical cloth was left inside her abdomen. She was discharged from the hospital on November 16, 2023. Soon after, her health began deteriorating and she experienced persistent and worsening abdominal pain. The woman said she later went to her parental home in Muzaffarnagar, where doctors advised medical tests.

## KAVACH INSTALLATION: RAILWAYS MISSES 2ND DEADLINE ON MUMBAI-DELHI-KOLKATA ROUTE, EYES 2026

**Diary Times Desk :** The Railway Ministry has missed the deadline to install the automatic train protection system, Kavach, on the New Delhi-Mumbai and New Delhi-Howrah routes by December 2025. However, officials are hopeful of operationalising the system by 2026. Kavach is an indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, which is a highly technology-intensive system. It helps loco pilots in running trains within specified speed limits by the automatic application of brakes in case they fail to do so. According to officials, about 25 per cent work has been commissioned and in ready-to-use condition. On the remaining portions, majority of components and equipment have been put in place. "We are doing our level best to operationalise Kavach on the Mumbai-Delhi and Delhi-Kolkata route, hoping that it will be achieved in 2026," officials said. The Railway Ministry on August 7, 2024, said that Kavach work would be completed on the said route by March 2025. It announced the extension of the deadline from March to December 2025 on February 1, 2025, in a budget document titled 'Railways estimates for Revised Estimates 2024-25 and Budget Estimates 2025-26'.

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## MANDALA SEASON: OVER 30 LAKH DEVOTEES VISIT SABARIMALA, REVENUE STANDS AT RS 332.77 CR



**Diary Times Desk :** A total of 30.56 lakh devotees have visited the famed Lord Ayyappa temple here so far during the Mandala Pooja season, generating a revenue of Rs 332.77 crore in the period, Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president K Jayakumar said on Saturday. Thousands of pilgrims thronged the hill temple here this morning to witness the auspicious Mandala pooja, marking the culmination of the 41-day-long first leg of the annual pilgrimage season. The mandala pooja was performed after adorning the idol of the Lord Ayyappa, the principal deity, with "thanka anki", the sacred golden attire brought to the Sannidhanam (temple complex) in a ceremonial procession on Friday evening. In a statement issued later in the day, Jayakumar said the increase in the number of pilgrims reflects the growing faith of devotees. "As many as 30,56,871 pilgrims had darshan up to Saturday afternoon. On Friday, 37,521 devotees visited.

## CONGRESS CWC MEETING BEGINS AT INDIRA BHAWAN; SIDDARAMAIAH, SHASHI THAROOR AMONG OTHERS PRESENT

**Diary Times Desk :** Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday chaired the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) Headquarters at Indira Bhawan in New Delhi. Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and other senior party leaders are present in the meeting, which is underway. Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal, Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhinder Singh Sukhu, Telangana CM Revanth Reddy, Congress Senior Leader Harish Rawat, Former External Affairs Minister Salman Khursid, MP Rajeev Shukla, and MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi were among the other leaders present at the meeting. Notably, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah was also present at the meeting amid the speculation of leadership change in the state, with Deputy CM DK Shivakumar adamant about fulfilling the 2.5-year leadership change agreement reportedly.

## NANDED FAMILY DEATHS: TWO SONS KILLED PARENTS, THEN DIED BY SUICIDE DUE TO FINANCIAL STRESS

**Diary Times Desk :** The probe into the deaths of four members of a family in Maharashtra's Nanded district has revealed that two siblings ended their lives by jumping in front of a train after strangling their parents at home, the murder-suicide tragedy being triggered by financial stress, a police official said on Saturday. Around 8 am on Thursday, the bodies of Ramesh Sonaji Lakhe (51) and his wife Radhabai Lakhe (45) were discovered on a cot in their home at Jawala Murar village in Mudkhed tehsil here, while the bodies of their sons, Umesh (25) and Bajrang (23), were subsequently found on tracks near Mugat railway station, a few kilometres away from the village. "Our probe and post-mortem reports have confirmed that Umesh and Bajrang strangled their parents at home while the couple was asleep and later committed suicide by jumping in front of a moving train," Barad police station inspector Dattatray Manthale told PTI. The official said Ramesh Lakhe was reportedly suffering from paralysis.

## ZERO FIR FILED, BENGAL POLICE TEAM SENT TO ODISHA: MAMATA ON DEATH OF MIGRANT WORKER

**Diary Times Desk :** Days after a 30-year-old migrant worker from West Bengal was allegedly killed in Sambalpur district of BJP-ruled Odisha, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday said a "zero FIR" was filed and a state police team went to the neighbouring state to carry out the investigation. She condemned the "brutal oppression, harassment and violence" against Bengali-speaking people in "every BJP-ruled state". The migrant worker from West Bengal was allegedly killed in Sambalpur district following an altercation over a bidi on Wednesday. In connection with the killing of the young man, Jewel Rana, the West Bengal Police have already "registered a zero FIR at the Suti police station and arrested six accused", Banerjee said. "A police team from West Bengal has travelled to Odisha to carry out the investigation," she said. "I strongly condemn the brutal oppression, harassment and violence against Bengali-speaking people."

## PM SINGLE HANDEDLY DESTROYED MGNREGA, CARRIED OUT DEVASTATING ATTACK ON STATES: RAHUL GANDHI

**Diary Times Desk :** Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "single-handedly destroying" MGNREGA without consulting his Cabinet or the states and without studying the matter, terming it an attack on the democratic structure that will ruin the rural economy. Addressing a press conference after the crucial CWC meeting, he targeted the BJP-led NDA government over the VB-G RAM G Act, alleging that the PM carried out a devastating attack on states and the poor, "much like demonetisation". He said the Congress has vowed that it would resist the government's action and expressed confidence that the entire opposition would be aligned with it. "The Prime Minister single-handedly destroyed MGNREGA without asking his Cabinet, and without studying the matter," the former Congress chief said. "We are going to resist it, we are going to fight it, and I am confident that the entire opposition will stand united against this action," he said, referring to the Congress' 'MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan' that it plans to launch nationwide on January 5. In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi later said, "There is only one purpose behind the end of MGNREGA."



# INTERNATIONAL

## MILONS OF AFGHANS FACE HUNGER AS AID CUTS DEEPEN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS



**Diary Times Desk :** For 10 hours a day, Rahimullah sells socks from his cart in eastern Kabul, earning about \$4.5 to \$6 per day. It's a pittance, but it's all he has to feed his family of five.

Rahimullah, who like many Afghans goes by only one name, is one of millions of Afghans who rely on humanitarian aid, both from the Afghan authorities and from international charity organisations, for survival. An estimated 22.9 million people, nearly half the population, required aid in 2025, the International Committee for the Red Cross said in an article on its website Monday.

But severe cuts in international aid, including the halting of US aid to programmes such as food distribution run by the United Nation's World Food Programme, have severed this lifeline.

More than 17 million people in Afghanistan now face crisis levels of hunger in the winter, the World Food Programme warned last week, 3 million more than were at risk more than a year ago. The slashing in aid has come as Afghanistan is battered by a struggling economy, recurrent droughts, two deadly earthquakes and the mass influx of Afghan refugees expelled from countries such as Iran and Pakistan. The resulting multiple shocks have severely pressured resources, including of housing and food. Tom Fletcher, the UN humanitarian chief, told the Security Council in mid-December that the situation.

## EXPLOSIONS HEARD IN KYIV DAY AHEAD OF TRUMP-ZELENSKY MEETING



**Diary Times Desk :** The capital of Kyiv came under a large-scale missile and drone attack overnight on Saturday, with multiple explosions reported across the Ukrainian capital and surrounding regions, one day ahead of the meeting between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky, as diplomatic efforts continue to end the four-year-long running war. According to the Kyiv Independent, citing monitoring sources, the capital was hit by a large-scale ballistic missile assault as Russia fired multiple Kinzhal hypersonic missiles, four Iskander ballistic missiles, and several Kalibr cruise missiles at the city. Numerous explosions throughout the capital were heard, as in the surrounding Kyiv Oblast, Kyiv Independent reported. In Brovary, a town about 20 km northeast of Kyiv, the strikes caused power outages affecting the town and nearby areas.

## 17 TERRORISTS KILLED IN BALOCHISTAN PROVINCE OF PAKISTAN

**Diary Times Desk :** Pakistani security forces have killed at least 17 terrorists belonging to outlawed insurgent groups in different intelligence-based operations in the troubled Balochistan province, the ISPR said on Saturday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing, these terrorists were killed in separate operations conducted between December 24 and 26 in the Kohlu, Kalat and Panjgur areas of the province. The intelligence-based operations (IBOs) were conducted on the reported presence of terrorists in the respective areas, the ISPR said. In the IBO on Friday, four terrorists were killed in Panjgur district after a heavy exchange of fire when the security forces surrounded the location where the terrorists were holed up. The ISPR said it killed five terrorists in Kohlu after a heavy exchange of fire with them on Thursday. In another operation on Wednesday, security forces effectively engaged the terrorists at their location and after an intense exchange of fire killed eight of them in Kalat.

## BNP'S TARIQUE RAHMAN REGISTERS AS BANGLADESHI VOTER AFTER 17 YEARS ABROAD IN SELF-EXILE

**Diary Times Desk :** BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman on Saturday completed the formalities to enlist himself on Bangladesh's voter list and obtain a national identity (NID) card, two days after his return from over 17 years of self-exile in London. The 60-year-old leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) visited the Election Commission (EC) office in Dhaka under tight security, where he provided fingerprints and iris scans for biometric enrolment, news portal tbsnews.net reported. He earlier submitted his voter registration application online, officials said. "Tarique Rahman has already filled out the online form and has come to complete the registration by providing his fingerprints and iris scan," ASM Humayun Kabir, director general of the National Identity Registration Wing of the Election Commission, told reporters. He is expected to receive his NID card within 24 hours, the official said. Rahman's daughter Zaima also completed her registration formalities for the NID card. Foolproof security arrangements were in place around the EC office premises, with members of the Bangladesh Army, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Ansar and police deployed in and around the area.



## INDONESIAN RESCUERS SEARCH FOR SPANISH FAMILY AFTER BOAT SINKS NEAR KOMODO ISLAND

**Diary Times Desk :** Indonesian rescuers searched for a family of four Spanish tourists on Saturday after a tour boat carrying 11 people sank overnight near Padar Island, a popular destination within Komodo National Park, officials said. The boat was carrying six Spanish tourists, four crew members and a local guide when it went down on Friday evening after suffering engine failure on a trip from Komodo Island to Padar, said Fathur Rahman, who heads the Maumere Search and Rescue Office. Rahman said three people were rescued by a passing vessel, and four others were picked up by a search and rescue team. "The missing passengers are a family of four Spanish nationals: a husband, wife and two children, and we are continuing the search efforts," Rahman said, "We hope today's operation will yield positive results." Komodo National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage site famed for its rugged landscapes, pristine beaches and the endangered Komodo dragon. The park attracts thousands of visitors for diving, trekking and wildlife tours.

## BANGLADESHI SINGER JAMES' CONCERT CANCELLED AFTER MOB THROWS BRICKS IN FARIDPUR; 25 INJURED

**Diary Times Desk :** Bangladesh's popular band icon James (Nagar Baul), scheduled on the closing day of the 185<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Faridpur Zilla School, was disrupted and ultimately cancelled following an attack. At least 25 people were injured in the incident. The concert was due to begin at around 9:30 pm on Friday night on the school premises. Just before James was to take the stage, a group of outsiders attempted to force their way into the venue. When they were denied entry, they began pelting bricks and stones and tried to seize control of the stage. Students of Faridpur Zilla School resisted the attack, forcing the assailants to retreat. "The reunion and cultural program was intended only for registered former and current students. Hearing about singer James, several thousand unregistered outsiders came to the venue. When they were not allowed to enter, they gathered on the adjacent Mujib Road. Later, on behalf of the organising committee, two projectors were set up outside. However, at around 9:30 pm, the outsiders attempted to climb over the wall to enter. When they were prevented from doing so, they began throwing bricks and stones one after another toward the school premises and the stage. When the people responsible for security tried.

## 'ZELENSKYY HAS NOTHING UNTIL I APPROVE IT': TRUMP ON UKRAINE'S 20-POINT PEACE PLAN

**Diary Times Desk :** As US President Donald Trump and Zelenskyy plan to meet in Florida this Sunday, Trump has said that any possible peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia will need his approval as Zelenskyy prepares a new 20-point peace plan, Politico reported. In an interview, Trump said, "He doesn't have anything until I approve it," Trump said. "So we'll see what he's got." Zelenskyy is expected to meet Trump in Florida on Sunday. He has said he will present a new 20-point peace plan aimed at ending the nearly four-year-long war with Russia. The peace plan proposed by US and Ukrainian officials is 90 per cent ready, Zelenskyy said on Friday. The proposal reportedly includes the idea of a demilitarised zone and discussions on security guarantees from the United States. Meanwhile, Trump is positive towards the upcoming meeting with leaders to end the war between Russia and Ukraine. "I think it's going to go good with him. I think it's going to go good with [Vladimir] Putin," Trump said, adding that he plans to speak with the Russian president "soon, as much as I want." Trump's comments came a day after Zelenskyy held talks with Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner. Zelenskyy later described that interaction as a "good conversation." Trump also confirmed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would be visiting him around the same time. "I have Zelenskyy and I have Bibi coming. They're all coming. They all come," Trump said. "They respect our country again."



## NEARLY 2 MILLION AFGHAN REFUGEES STILL LIVING IN PAKISTAN AMID DEPORTATIONS: UNHCR REPORT

**Diary Times Desk :** Nearly two million Afghan refugees are currently living in Pakistan, according to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Tolo News reported, citing Pakistani media. The report said that although more than one million Afghans returned to their country in 2025, a large number of Afghan citizens continue to remain in Pakistan. "Despite the return of more than one million Afghans to Afghanistan in 2025, according to the latest data published by the UNHCR, nearly two million Afghans still live in Pakistan," the report said. Afghan refugees have urged authorities to give them more time to return home, especially during the winter season. Mohammad, an Afghan refugee, told Tolo News.

## ZELENSKYY ALLEGES RUSSIA OF ONGOING ATTACKS, SAYS RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS HIT

**Diary Times Desk :** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday said that while Russian attacks continue on Kyiv, since last night there have been almost 500 drones and 40 missiles fired. He wrote on X, "Another Russian attack is still ongoing: since last night, there have been almost 500 drones - a large number of "shaheds" - as well as 40 missiles, including Kinzhals. The primary target is Kyiv - energy facilities and civilian infrastructure. Regrettably, there have been hits, and ordinary residential buildings have been damaged. Rescuers are searching for a person trapped under the rubble of one of them. In some districts of the capital and the region, electricity and heating are currently unavailable. Firefighting efforts are underway. Repair crews have already begun work."

## INDIA-NEW ZEALAND FREE TRADE AGREEMENT MEANS MORE JOBS, INCOMES, TRADE: PM CHRISTOPHER LUXON

**Diary Times Desk :** New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon has described the Free Trade Agreement with India as a landmark deal, noting that it means more jobs, higher incomes and more exports from Indian markets. "We said we'd secure a Free Trade Agreement with India in our first term, and we've delivered. This landmark deal means more jobs, higher incomes and more exports by opening the door to 1.4 billion Indian consumers. Fixing the Basics. Building the Future," the New Zealand Prime Minister said in a post on X. On December 22, India and New Zealand have concluded a comprehensive, balanced and forward-looking Free Trade Agreement (FTA), marking a major economic and strategic milestone in India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. The FTA stands out as one of India's fastest-concluded FTAs aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The negotiations were formally launched on March 16, 2025 during the meeting between Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and Minister for Trade and Investment of New Zealand Todd McClay. The agreement was concluded by holding continuous and intense discussions spread over 5 formal negotiation rounds, several in-person and virtual intersessions.



## OVER 50 VEHICLES INVOLVED IN MASSIVE PILE-UP IN JAPAN; 1 DEAD, 26 INJURED

**Diary Times Desk :** A massive crash in snowy weather has killed one person and injured 26 on an expressway in Japan as the country kicked off its end-of-the-year holiday season. The Gunma prefectural highway police said on Saturday that the pileup on the Kan-etsu Expressway late Friday started with a collision between two trucks in the town of Minakami, about 160 km northwest of Tokyo. A 77-year-old woman from Tokyo died, police said. Out of the 26 injured, five were reported to be in serious condition. The crash of the trucks blocked parts of the expressway, and cars coming from behind them were unable to brake on the snowy surface. More than 50 vehicles were involved in the pileup, police said. A fire erupted at the far end of the pileup, spreading to more than a dozen vehicles, some of which were completely burned. Nobody was injured from the fire, which was extinguished about seven hours later, police said. A warning about heavy snow was in effect late Friday, when many Japanese started their year-end and New Year holidays.

## EX-MALAYSIAN PM SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS, FINED \$2.8 BN FOR GRAFT

**Diary Times Desk :** Imprisoned former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak was sentenced to 15 years and a hefty 13.5 billion ringgit (\$2.8 billion) in fines after being convicted Friday in his biggest corruption trial tied to the multibillion-dollar looting of the 1MDB state investment fund. The nation's High Court found Najib, 72, guilty on four counts of abuse of power and 21 charges of money laundering related to more than \$700 million channelled into his personal bank accounts from the 1MDB fund.

Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah sentenced Najib to 15 years in prison for each charge of abuse of power, and five years for each of the money laundering charges.

The sentences are to run concurrently which means he will face another 15 years in prison. The new sentence will run after his current term for an earlier 1MDB case ends, the judge said. He also imposed a fine of 13.5 million ringgit. If Najib fails to pay, he faces another 10 years in prison.

Najib's lawyer said they plan to appeal the verdict. Najib denied any wrongdoing and maintained the funds were a political donation from Saudi Arabia and that he had been misled by rogue financiers led by Low Taek Jho. Low, thought to be the scandal's mastermind, remains at large. Najib set up the 1MDB development fund shortly after taking office in 2009.

### NEPAL INTERIM PM URGES MAJOR PARTIES TO ENSURE SUCCESS OF MARCH POLLS

**Diary Times Desk :** Nepal's interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki on Saturday held a meeting with the chiefs of the three largest political parties, urging them to fulfil their role in ensuring the successful conduct of the March polls. During the meeting, the interim prime minister urged major political parties to ensure that the upcoming House of Representatives election, being held under challenging circumstances, is carried out successfully. As per the interim prime minister's secretariat, Karki told the leaders that the election must be viewed as an investment in the nation's future and a necessary step towards securing a stable and durable democracy. She emphasised that holding successful elections is a shared responsibility. "Let us make this election successful at any cost. Everyone must take part. The government assumes you are ready for the polls. The election environment is taking shape -- this is welcome," the prime minister said during the meeting. During the meeting, the interim prime minister also stated that adequate resources have been provided to the Election Commission and security agencies for the commencement of the election. She added that the morale of security personnel has improved as preparations advance.



### AFGHANISTAN LAUNCHES PROBE INTO BORDER INCIDENT, SEEKS COORDINATION WITH TAJIKISTAN

**Diary Times Desk :** The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has initiated a serious investigation into a recent incident near the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border, with officials underlining the need for coordination to prevent similar incidents in the future, Tolo News reported. Earlier, Russia's TASS news agency, citing Tajikistan's State Committee for National Security, reported that an armed clash had occurred between Tajik border guards and a group of militants attempting to cross into Tajikistan from Afghanistan. The incident reportedly resulted in the deaths of five people, including two Tajik border guards. Speaking during the 6th of Jadi ceremony in Kabul, Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said he had discussed the issue with the Tajik foreign minister. He said both sides stressed the need for joint efforts to maintain border stability and prevent a recurrence. Raising concerns over attempts to damage bilateral relations.

### SOMALIA CONDEMNS ISRAEL'S RECOGNITION OF SOMALILAND AS "STATE AGGRESSION"

**Diary Times Desk :** Somalia has sharply criticised Israel's decision to recognise the breakaway region of Somaliland, demanding that the move be reversed and describing it as an act of "aggression that will never be tolerated". Ali Omar, Somalia's state minister for foreign affairs, said the government would pursue all available diplomatic avenues to challenge what it termed an act of "state aggression" and interference in Somalia's internal affairs. He said the decision directly undermined Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, telling Al Jazeera that Mogadishu viewed the move as unacceptable. The strong reaction came a day after Israel became the first country to formally recognise Somaliland, triggering swift condemnation from African and Arab states.

The development also raised concerns over whether the move was linked to alleged Israeli plans to forcibly displace Palestinians.

### CHINA'S ECONOMIC ILLUSION CRACKS AS NEW ANALYSIS EXPOSES DEEPENING STRUCTURAL CRISIS



**Diary Times Desk :** A fresh analysis has raised serious doubts about China's official economic narrative, suggesting that China's actual growth is far weaker than government figures claim, exposing structural weaknesses that could accelerate its global isolation, as reported by The Epoch Times. According to The Epoch Times, A December 22 report by international consultancy Rhodium Group estimates that China's real economic growth in 2025 likely ranged between 2.5 and 3 per cent, nearly half of the officially declared 5.2 per cent expansion.

The report attributes this discrepancy primarily to a sharp contraction in fixed asset investment, which plunged 11 per cent year-on-year between July and November, alongside shrinking credit growth and persistent deflationary pressure. Analysts note that no major economy has maintained 5 per cent growth while suffering from prolonged deflation, a condition China has now endured for ten consecutive quarters. Tsai Ming-fang, a professor at Tamkang University, said the consistency of China's reported growth figures raises red flags, suggesting they are politically engineered rather than economically grounded. Official Chinese data shows consumer prices rose just 0.7 per cent in November, while producer prices fell 2.2 per cent, marking the 38th straight month of decline. Tsai stated that exports can no longer compensate for weakening.

### OVER 50-VEHICLE PILEUP ON JAPAN EXPRESSWAY KILLS 2, INJURES 26

**Diary Times Desk :** Amid heavy snowfall, a large-scale pileup involving more than 50 vehicles on an expressway in Japan's Gunma Prefecture has left at least two people dead and 26 others injured, Kyodo News reported. The incident occurred on Friday evening, around 7:30 pm (local time) on the outbound carriageway of the Kanetsu Expressway in Minakami, northwest of Tokyo.

Police said snowy conditions turned the road surface icy, causing several vehicles to skid out of control. This led to a chain-reaction crash spanning roughly 300 metres, according to Kyodo News. Officials said the accident was triggered when a truck slammed into another truck that had stopped following an earlier single-vehicle crash.

The impact escalated rapidly, involving dozens of vehicles. At least 10 vehicles caught fire, and firefighters took more than seven hours to bring the blaze under control. Police confirmed that a 77-year-old woman from Tokyo, who was seated in the rear of a car driven by her family members, was among those killed.

### AFGHANISTAN: JAPAN PLEDGES USD 2 MILLION IN HUMANITARIAN AID FOR RETURNEES

**Diary Times Desk :** Japan has said that it will provide USD 2 million in humanitarian funding for assisting returnees in Afghanistan. In a post on X on Friday, the UN Refugee Agency in Afghanistan underlined that the funding would help provide vital protection and assistance for the returning families.

"UNHCR thanks the Government of Japan for the USD 2 million contribution supporting Afghan refugee returnees. This funding will help provide vital protection and assistance to families returning. We value Japan's continued partnership and solidarity with the Afghan people.

On December 19, the Embassy of Japan in Afghanistan, in a series of posts on X, had announced that the Japanese Government would provide an additional 19.5 million USD assistance to Afghanistan, covering both humanitarian and basic human needs. "We hope this assistance will make a difference in the lives of vulnerable Afghans in need", it said on X.

The Embassy further noted that the assistance would be delivered through partners such as the UN agencies, international organizations and Japanese NGOs.

## UAE ACHIEVES LANDMARK CULTURAL MILESTONES DRIVEN BY NATIONAL, KNOWLEDGE INITIATIVES



**Diary Times Desk :** The United Arab Emirates witnessed a series of prominent cultural and knowledge achievements in 2025, extending its approach to strengthening national identity, developing the cultural sector, safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage, and consolidating the country's position as a global destination for knowledge, creativity and the arts. Federal and local efforts continued through the launch of high-quality cultural initiatives, the opening of major museums, the announcement of significant archaeological discoveries, and the strengthening of the UAE's presence on the global cultural stage.

The UAE approved the Sheikh Zayed Farm in Al Khawaneej as the country's third national site, alongside Dar Al Etiad and Argoub Al Sedirah, in recognition of its historical significance as the location of pivotal meetings during the establishment of the Union. The Cabinet approved the drafting of a federal law on cultural heritage aimed at protecting, documenting, preserving, managing and promoting the UAE's cultural heritage, encouraging its study, enhancing cultural exchange and diversity, and ensuring its sustainability.

## EARTHQUAKE OF MAGNITUDE 4.0 STRIKES AFGHANISTAN

**Diary Times Desk :** An earthquake of magnitude 4.0 struck Afghanistan on Saturday, a statement by the National Center for Seismology (NCS) said. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 110km. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 4.0, On: 27/12/2025 12:04:34 IST, Lat: 36.53 N, Long: 71.63 E, Depth: 110 Km, Location: Afghanistan." In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 4.6, On: 19/12/2025 12:04:54 IST, Lat: 36.25 N, Long: 69.09 E, Depth: 62 Km, Location: Afghanistan." Earlier in the day, another earthquake of magnitude 5.3 shook the region at a depth of 40km. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 5.3, On: 19/12/2025 11:09:11 IST, Lat: 36.26 N, Long: 69.19 E, Depth: 40 Km, Location: Afghanistan." Afghanistan frequently experiences earthquakes, particularly in the Hindu Kush region, which lies in a highly active seismic zone, according to the Red Cross. The recent tremors follow a powerful 6.3-magnitude earthquake that struck northern Afghanistan on November 4. According to Afghan authorities.

## AFGHANISTAN: POWER CUTS DEEPEN WINTER HARSHNESS FOR KABUL RESIDENTS

**Diary Times Desk :** Ongoing electricity outages in Kabul have worsened living conditions during the winter season, with residents appealing to authorities for a more consistent power supply, Tolo News reported. Locals said the irregular availability of electricity has disrupted daily routines, especially at night. A Kabul resident, Omar, said, "The electricity issues are very serious. Sometimes it comes at 1 or 2 am, and then it goes off again in the middle of the night." The power cuts have also hampered office work and services dependent on technology. Another resident, Shafiq, said, "We face many problems in the office because we rely on computers, the internet, and other technology, but we don't have electricity at all," Tolo News reported. Economic analysts have linked the persistent outages to Afghanistan's dependence on imported electricity and limited investment in domestic power infrastructure, noting that sustainable solutions require.

## ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS, PLACES OF WORSHIP UNACCEPTABLE: UN CHIEF CONDEMNED TERRORIST ATTACK ON SYRIAN MOSQUE

**Diary Times Desk :** UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Saturday condemned the terrorist attack which took place during the Friday prayer at the Ali Bin Abi Talib Mosque in Homs in Syria. He offered condolences and wished for the speedy recovery of the injured. In a post on X, Guterres said, "I strongly condemn the deadly terrorist attack during Friday Prayers at the Ali Bin Abi Talib Mosque in Homs, Syria. Attacks against civilians and places of worship are unacceptable. My condolences to the families of those killed and my sympathy to all those injured, wishing them a prompt and full recovery." At least eight people were killed, and 18 were injured following an explosion at the Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib Mosque in Syria, SANA reported on Friday. Citing officials at the Syrian Health Ministry, SANA said that eight people were killed and 18 others injured in the blast, according to preliminary figures. It further mentioned that the victims were moved to the Karam al-Louz Hospital in Homs. According to SANA, the Interior Ministry said internal security units deployed to the site and established a security cordon around the mosque in the Wadi al-Dahab district of Homs, central Syria. The relevant authorities launched an investigation and have begun collecting evidence to track down those responsible for the criminal act. A security source told SANA that initial investigations indicate the explosion was caused by explosive devices planted inside the mosque. Soon after the explosion, the Syrian Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the terrorist blast which struck the mosque during Friday prayers.



## MOUNT ETNA EMITS LIGHT ASH, SPORADIC EXPLOSIONS IN SICILY

**Diary Times Desk :** Mount Etna on the Italian island of Sicily witnessed renewed volcanic activity yesterday, marked by the emission of incandescent material and limited amounts of ash from the volcano's north-eastern crater.

In a statement, Italy's National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology said that winds pushed the eruption cloud towards the north-east, with light ashfall recorded in the coastal town of Taormina and the Piano Provenzana area, which includes ski slopes.

The institute reported intermittent explosions at the Bocca Nuova crater, during which incandescent material was ejected to heights of several tens of metres above the crater rim.

The regional civil protection agency temporarily raised the alert level as a precaution against the possible occurrence of lava fountains. Mount Etna is Europe's most active volcano, standing at around 3,400 metres high. It experiences frequent eruptions throughout the year and is subject to continuous monitoring, with its height and summit shape changing as a result of eruptions.

## CHINA TIGHTENS CONTROL IN TIBETAN REGIONS AS RELIGIOUS LEADER'S DETENTION TRIGGERS FRESH CLAMPDOWN

**Diary Times Desk :** Chinese authorities have escalated political pressure on Tibetan communities in Amdo Golgo following the detention of prominent Buddhist figure Chogtrul Dorje Tenzin. The development has intensified fears of expanding surveillance and coercive governance across Tibetan regions, Phayul reported.

According to Phayul, Chogtrul Dorje Tenzin, the abbot of Minthang Monastery, Osel Thegchog Ling, and head of the Minthang Ethnic Vocational School, was taken into custody on December 4, with the circumstances unclear. No official charges have been disclosed, nor has any information been provided regarding his current location or the authority responsible for his detention. Following his arrest, Chinese officials convened a compulsory meeting in the Minthang area under the banner of a "2025 Rural Governance Credit Score Exchange Conference."

Residents were instructed that at least one representative from each household must attend, effectively eliminating the option to abstain.

## DHARAVI REDEVELOPMENT SHIFTS FROM ASPIRATION TO ACTION IN 2025, AS CONSTRUCTION WORK BEGAN ON 6.5 ACRES OF RAILWAY LAND

**Diary Times Desk :** The Dharavi Redevelopment Project undertaken by the Adani Group reached a significant milestone in 2025, as the multi-decade plan transitioned from conceptualisation to physical construction. According to a press release, the year saw the start of construction on 6.5 acres of railway land, marking the first tangible progress in over 40 years. This development follows the Maharashtra government's allocation of multiple land parcels across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region to house residents ineligible for on-site rehabilitation. The project is being managed through a special-purpose vehicle that functions as a public-private partnership between the state government and a private partner. Under this framework, the state government maintains full ownership of the land while the special purpose vehicle pays a development rights premium to execute the renewal mission. This structure was designed to create an "executable pathway for a project historically considered too complex to start".

## ODISHA TO HOLD MEETING ON JAN 3 TO FINALISE AUCTION DETAILS FOR MAJOR, CRITICAL MINERAL BLOCKS

**Diary Times Desk :** The Odisha government will hold a high-level meeting on January 3, 2026, to finalise the annual auction calendar for major mineral blocks as well as critical and strategic mineral blocks, in line with the Ministry of Mines' directive to bring greater predictability and transparency to the mineral auction process. According to an official communication from the Department of Steel and Mines, the meeting will be chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary of the Steel and Mines Department and will take place at 4:00 pm in the Steel Room of the department in Bhubaneswar. The Ministry of Mines, Government of India, has advised states to prepare and publish an annual auction calendar for mineral blocks within prescribed timelines. In pursuance of this, the Directorate of Mines and Geology (DMG), Odisha, has proposed a list of major mineral blocks along with critical and strategic mineral blocks.

## STRONG FUNDAMENTALS, BIG-TICKET INVESTMENTS TO PROPEL INDIA'S FDI IN 2026

**Diary Times Desk :** FDI inflows into India are expected to register robust growth in 2026, supported by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, big-ticket investment announcements, sustained efforts to improve the ease of doing business, and a new generation of investment-linked trade pacts. To ensure that India remains an attractive and investor-friendly destination, the government reviews the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) policy on an ongoing basis and makes changes from time to time after holding extensive consultations with stakeholders. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has this year held a series of meetings with stakeholders on ways to promote FDI. In November, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal also held consultations on ways to attract greater investments by making processes faster, smoother, and more efficient. Investor-friendly policies and regulatory practices, strong return on investments, a talented workforce, easing compliance burdens, decriminalising minor industry-related offences, and streamlined approvals are key measures that are keeping foreign investors focused on India despite global challenges.



## CENTRE RELEASES OVER RS 723 CRORE FOR RURAL BODIES IN RAJASTHAN AND JHARKHAND

**Diary Times Desk :** The Union Government released more than Rs 723 crores as grants to help rural local bodies in Rajasthan and Jharkhand. This money was given under the Fifteenth Finance Commission to make village-level institutions stronger, according to a Ministry of Panchayati Raj press release. The government sent these funds to help local groups carry out important work in their areas. In Rajasthan, a total of Rs 303.0419 crores was released as the first part of the money for the financial year 2025-26. This specific amount was meant for 24 district panchayats, 339 block panchayats, and 3,857 gram panchayats.

In addition to this, the government also gave Rs 145.24 crores to Rajasthan. This was part of the money that was held back earlier from the first and second instalments of the year 2024-25. It was given to those rural groups that met the rules to receive it. For the state of Jharkhand, the government released Rs 275.1253 crores. This was the first part of the grant for the financial year 2024-25. This money was distributed among all 24 district panchayats in the state. It also helped 253 block panchayats and 4,342 gram panchayats across Jharkhand.



## RESOLUTION OF USD 247 MILLION KG-D6 OIL BLOCK DISPUTE BETWEEN RIL AND GOVERNMENT LIKELY BY 2026

**Diary Times Desk :** A long-standing financial disagreement between the Indian government and Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) regarding the KG-D6 oil block may reach a conclusion in early 2026. The dispute involves a USD 247 million claim by the government for a higher share of profits from the gas field. This legal process is currently in its final stages within an international arbitration setting.

The issue began when the government decided to block Reliance from recovering some of the money it spent on building infrastructure for the KG-D6 oil block. Under the original New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) agreement, companies are allowed to get back all the money they invest in drilling and pipes before they start sharing profits with the government. Reliance, along with its partners bp and Niko, spent this money to set up the deepwater facility. According to a statement, "the production sharing contracts under NELP explicitly allow an operator to first recover all its development costs fully, before the government's profit share begins." The document explains that finding oil and gas is a high-risk business, and companies take on all the financial danger themselves. In this case, the government did not invest any money and faced no financial risk, yet it still received a significant share of profits and taxes.



## INDIAN DAIRY SECTOR FACES TIGHT SUPPLY AS DEMAND STRENGTHENS AHEAD OF 2026: REPORT

**Diary Times Desk :** India's dairy sector is entering a phase of tighter supply and margin recalibration after navigating sharp cycles of disruption, surplus, and recovery over the past three years, according to insights from an expert session hosted by Systematix Institutional Equities.

The post-COVID period of 2022-23 proved challenging for the industry, marked by an unreasonable fall in milk prices that failed to cover farmers' production costs. According to the Systematix report, this led to reduced cattle induction and a sharp drop in milk output.

From mid-2023, however, renewed farmer engagement by leading cooperatives and private players, including sustainable fodder programs, helped restore confidence and revive supply. These efforts resulted in a sharp rebound during the October 2024-March 2025 flush season, when milk production surged by nearly 25 per cent, creating a temporary surplus.

## INDIA'S ELECTRONICS PRODUCTION RISES 6-FOLD, EXPORTS JUMP 8-FOLD SINCE 2014: ASHWINI VAISHNAW

**Diary Times Desk :** India saw a ramp-up of electronics production by 6 times and export increasing 8 times in the last 11 years, Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav said, lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

Electronic goods production rose from Rs 1.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 11.3 lakh crore in 2024-25. Exports during the period rose from Rs 0.38 lakh crore to Rs 3.3 lakh crore. PLI Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (LSEM) attracted over Rs 13,475 crore worth of investment, with a production of Rs 9.8 lakh crore achieved, the Union minister reported through a series of posts on X. According to the Minister, the growth in electronics manufacturing in India should be credited to PM Modi's vision of developing a comprehensive ecosystem. Electronics manufacturing created 25 lakh jobs in the last decade. "This is the real economic growth at the grassroots level."

## DMART PRIORITISES STORE EXPANSION TO DRIVE LONG-TERM CASH FLOW, AS JIOMART AND BLINKIT LEAD WEEKLY ACTIVE USER GROWTH: REPORT

**Diary Times Desk :** Indian retail giant DMart is prioritising long-term growth through a massive store expansion strategy that is expected to delay its ability to generate significant cash in the short term, according to the CLSA India Weekender - ALL THINGS INDIA report.

The report noted that DMart is in a phase of aggressive growth, with plans to add 15-20 per cent annually. This strategy is common for large retailers during their early years of expansion. "Historically, free cash flow in the early years of expansion is negative due to rapid store additions," the research stated. Management for the retailer currently has visibility for 2,200 stores. Given the high volume of upcoming projects, the company's near-term free cash flow is likely to remain negative or minimal. However, global examples like Walmart and Costco show that as store expansion slows and becomes routine, a company's cash balance starts to turn significantly positive. To compete with other players, DMart is expanding its private-label brands. These products are priced 40-50 per cent lower than famous brands, and sometimes cost only one-third as much. While many people are starting to use quick commerce apps for fast deliveries, CLSA expects these services to account for less than 20 per cent of urban consumption by 2035. This creates significant demand for physical stores like DMart to meet. In the digital space, the report tracks weekly usage of shopping apps. For the week ending December 8, JioMart saw the highest increase in weekly active users, followed by the delivery app Blinkit. While most major e-commerce players saw a drop in users that week, the app Meesho grew its user base to 169.8 million.



## INDIAN ETF AUM CROSSES RS 10 LAKH CRORE, DOUBLES IN 3 YEARS: ZERODHA FUND HOUSE



**Diary Times Desk :** India's Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) industry has crossed a major milestone, with Assets Under Management (AUM) exceeding Rs 10 lakh crore as of October 2025, according to Zerodha Fund House. The industry has doubled its total AUM over the past three years, reflecting a steady shift in investor preference toward low-cost, transparent investment products.

The Indian ETF ecosystem has also witnessed a sharp rise in trading activity, Zerodha Fund House said in a statement recently. ETF trading volumes increased more than seven-fold, climbing from Rs 51,000 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 3.83 lakh crore in FY 2024-25. This surge highlights improving market depth and participation across exchanges, the fund house said. Momentum has continued into the current financial year.

In the first half of 2025-26 alone, ETF trading volumes crossed Rs 3.2 lakh crore, nearly matching the entire volume recorded in the previous year. Zerodha Fund House noted that higher liquidity has contributed to tighter spreads, improved price discovery, and smoother trade execution for investors. Retail participation has emerged as a key growth driver. The number of ETF investor accounts rose more than eight-fold over five years, increasing from about 41 lakh folios in November 2020 to over three crore folios by November 2025.

This rise has been supported by greater investor awareness and easier access through digital investment platforms. "For new investors, ETFs act as a versatile tool to take exposure to different asset classes, themes, and segments since they are simple, cost-effective and transparent in their structure," said Vaibhav Jalan, CBO, Zerodha Fund House. Equity ETFs continue to dominate the segment, accounting for 25 lakh new folios added in the last 12 months. However, investor preferences are gradually becoming more diversified, with rising allocations to precious metals, it added. Gold and silver ETFs together now represent nearly 15 per cent of total ETF AUM as of November 2025. Over the past year, gold ETF AUM doubled to cross Rs 1 lakh crore, while silver ETF AUM quadrupled to over Rs 49,000 crore, indicating growing interest in portfolio diversification. Vishal Jain, CEO, Zerodha Fund House, said, "Crossing the ₹10 Lakh Crore AUM mark is a landmark moment for the Indian ETF space. Having launched India's first ETFs across equity, gold, liquid,"

## HIMACHAL TO RECEIVE SNOW, RAIN FROM DECEMBER 30

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal Pradesh, which at present is going through a prolonged dry spell, is expected to receive fresh snow and rain from December 30 onwards, bringing cheer to tourists as well as the locals.

As per the state's Meteorological Department, a fresh Western Disturbance is likely to affect the western Himalayan region from December 30. As a result, middle and higher hills of the state will be witnessing light snowfall and rainfall at isolated places from December 30 to January 1. However, the weather is expected to remain dry in plains and lower hills during this period.

While minimum temperatures are expected to rise by 2°C to 4°C in the state till December 30, minimum temperatures will gradually fall by 2°C to 5°C from December 30 onwards. Similarly, maximum temperatures are also expected to rise by 3°C to 5°C till December 30 after which those will fall by 2°C to 6°C.

The lower hills and plain areas of the state are very likely to witness dense fog during early morning and late evenings, for which the department has issued an orange warning for Bilaspur.

## AMBULANCE SERVICES HALT IN MANDI AS STAFF STRIKE WORK

**Diary Times Desk :** Ambulance services in Mandi district were disrupted today following a two-day strike call given by ambulance employees affiliated with the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU). The strike began at midnight yesterday and would continue till Saturday night, affecting emergency medical services in the district.

According to the union, all 169 ambulance employees in Mandi district, including drivers and Emergency Medical Technicians, joined the strike. As a result, services at 28 locations were halted and 50 ambulances and bike ambulances were not operational, severely impacting public healthcare services. The striking employees gathered at the district headquarters here, staged a demonstration and took out a rally through Mandi city. Union leaders claimed that the strike was 100 per cent successful in the district. The protest was led by District union president of ambulance staff, Sumit Kapoor, general Secretary Pankaj Kumar.

## SHIMLA DOCTOR'S TERMINATION SPARKS INDEFINITE STRIKE, HALTING MEDICAL CARE IN HIMACHAL'S IGMC

**Diary Times Desk :** Medical services, barring emergency care, were severely affected across several government hospitals in Himachal Pradesh on Saturday as resident doctors went on an indefinite strike to protest the termination of a doctor accused of assaulting a patient. Patients and their attendants, particularly those travelling from remote areas, faced major difficulties due to the unavailability of doctors. "I came here on Thursday from Ani, about 125 kilometres from Shimla, for my father's treatment. But doctors are unavailable because of the strike, and we are facing inconvenience," said Krishan Singh Thakur, an attendant. He added that peak winter cold and the lack of accommodation due to the heavy tourist rush around the New Year had compounded their problems. Thakur urged the government and doctors to resolve the issue at the earliest in the interest of patients.



## YEAR 2025: CALAMITIES, RUSH TO REBUILD, MOUNTING DEBT KEEP HIMACHAL ON EDGE

**Diary Times Desk :** A debilitating natural disaster, constant financial crunch, and war against 'chitta' marked the year in Himachal Pradesh, which also witnessed historic court verdicts and furore over the mysterious death of a power corporation engineer.

Excessive rains during the monsoon caused havoc, triggering multiple cloudbursts, flash floods, and landslides in the state. Nature's fury spared none, reducing houses, roads, bridges, and public utilities to rubble, stranding many and killing at least 240 people.

Chamba, Mandi, Kullu, and Kangra districts were hit the most severely. The government invoked Section 34 of the National Disaster Management Act and declared the entire state "disaster-affected." By the end of it, the government pegged the state losses at Rs 5,000 crore. The widespread destruction drew the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who visited the wrecked districts and announced a relief package of Rs 1,500 crore. That was hardly the end of it. The Congress government accused the Centre of not coming good on its promises of the relief grant, while the BJP parried the charge and accused the government of failing to meet people's expectations.

## SCOLDED OVER WATCHING CARTOONS, HIMACHAL GIRL, 7, WALKS OUT OF HOME, FOUND HOURS LATER 5 KM AWAY

**Diary Times Desk :** What started as a typical scolding by a mother over watching cartoons, quickly escalated into a tense search for a seven-year-old girl in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur. The incident occurred in a village in the Bhoranj area of the district on Friday morning, when the child's mother, who was at home with her three children, scolded her eldest daughter over watching cartoons and asked her have food, officials said.

Upset over the scolding, the girl tiptoed her way out of the house while her mother was busy with household chores, they added. As the morning stretched on with no sign of the girl, the family panicked and immediately informed the Bhoranj police station. The police quickly swung into action and scanned the CCTV cameras installed in nearby areas as the matter concerned the safety of a young child. After a strenuous search lasting about four hours, the police successfully located the girl who had walked nearly 5 kilometres away from her house. The girl was returned to her parents who breathed a sigh of relief and expressed their gratitude to the police administration for the timely rescue.

## YOUR HOROSCOPE

28-12-2025

### 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 high 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.

## PUNJAB, HARYANA REEL UNDER INTENSE COLD; DENSE FOG IN MANY AREAS

**Diary Times Desk :** Punjab and Haryana are reeling under intense cold while dense fog enveloped many areas in both states on Saturday.

Ballaval Saunkhri in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district was the coldest place in Punjab, recording a low of 4.4°C, according to a report of the local meteorological department. Among other areas in Punjab, Amritsar recorded a low of 5.1°C, two degrees above normal. Ludhiana shivered at 4.6 °C while Patiala's minimum was 7 °C.

Pathankot, Bathinda, Faridkot and Gurdaspur recorded their respective lows of 5.4, 6, 4.9 and 5.8 °C. Chandigarh, the joint capital of the two states, recorded a minimum of 6.9 °C. In neighbouring Haryana, Gurugram was the coldest place with a low of 4.9 °C. The minimum temperature in Ambala was recorded at 9.3 °C, three degrees above normal, while Hisar's low was 5°C. Karnal recorded a low of 8 °C, two degrees above normal.

## BEE SWARM INJURES OVER 2 DOZEN CANDIDATES AT BSF RECRUITMENT RALLY IN SRIGANGANAGAR

**Diary Times Desk :** More than two dozen candidates were injured after a large swarm of bees attacked participants during a Border Security Force (BSF) recruitment rally at the BSF Sector Headquarters ground in Sriganganagar, around 40 km from Abohar, on Thursday.

The incident occurred when the first batch of nearly 100 candidates was running. A swarm of bees suddenly emerged from nearby trees and attacked those on the field, triggering panic across the venue. Candidates from the second batch, who were undergoing document verification, were also caught in the chaos.

Around two dozen injured candidates were rushed to the district civil hospital, where doctors treated them. Three candidates were admitted due to the severity of their injuries, while others were discharged after receiving treatment in the outpatient department. A medical team was also sent to the BSF ground to provide on-the-spot treatment to those with minor injuries.

## 15 ARRESTED, EQUIPMENT SEIZED IN CRACKDOWN AGAINST ILLEGAL MINING IN MOHALI

**Diary Times Desk :** The Punjab Police on Saturday said it has arrested 15 persons and also seized machinery and vehicles used for illegal mining during an operation conducted across multiple locations in Mohali. Mohali SSP Harmandeep Singh Hans said the crackdown against individuals and networks involved in unlawful mining activities was conducted during the intervening night of December 26 and 27, through simultaneous raids under the Sohna, Majri and Dera Bassi police station limits. Hans said, as a result of the operation, 20 FIRs were registered and 15 persons were arrested on the spot. The police also seized machinery and vehicles used for illegal mining, including an earth-moving machine, 14 loaded tippers, and two tractor-trolleys. The illegally-extracted material recovered from the dumping sites has been assessed by the geology mining department for further legal and administrative action. In addition, notices have been issued to crusher owners and other persons suspected to be involved in these illegal activities. Hans said police follow a zero-tolerance policy towards illegal mining, and such operations will continue in a sustained manner to safeguard natural resources and uphold the rule of law.



## 70-80 PER CENT JOBS GOING TO OUTSIDERS, HARYANA'S YOUTH LOSING OUT: CONGRESS STATE CHIEF

**Diary Times Desk :** Congress' Haryana unit president Rao Narendra Singh on Saturday launched a sharp attack on the state's BJP government, alleging that 70-80 per cent of government jobs were being given to "outsiders".

Rao questioned the state's policy on government recruitment, asking if Haryana's youth had become so "incompetent" that they were being deprived of jobs in favour of candidates from other states.

He also demanded the immediate cancellation of the assistant engineer recruitment in Haryana Power Utilities in line with the state's "social and cultural factors" by prioritising local youth. The Congress leader demanded that Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini clarify his stand on the issue, saying his "silence" raised serious questions. He said the job situation was a direct attack on the rights of hardworking youth of Haryana, which would make them second-class citizens in their own state. A large number of candidates from outside Haryana were being selected in recruitments under a "well-planned policy" for posts such as tutor, patwari, clerk, assistant engineer.

## NEPHEW MASTERMINDS RS 39 LAKH HEIST FROM OWN UNCLE IN BAHADURGARH

**Diary Times Desk :** A shocking robbery case in Bahadurgarh has revealed a nephew as the mastermind behind a plot to steal Rs 39 lakh from his own uncle. The incident occurred on Friday night, but police cracked the case within hours, arresting four accused, including the nephew. Sube Singh of Rewari reported that he was returning from Karnal with cash payments in his car, accompanied by nephew Sunil alias Sahil. The cash was kept in the car's boot. According to the complainant, while driving along the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal expressway, Sunil asked him to stop, and moments later, five to six youths attacked Sube Singh, assaulted him, and looted the cash. Police used technical evidence, CCTV footage, and interrogations to gather leads. "The robbery was meticulously planned, with Sunil orchestrating the crime with accomplices," said Inspector Rajesh Kumar, Asaudha police station. Four suspects were arrested: Sunil alias Sahil, Sunny of Khetawas, Amit of Budheda Chandu, and Vansh of Sardhana. They're being interrogated and will be presented in a Bahadurgarh court.

## PRESIDENT MURMU, PM MODI PAY TRIBUTE TO GURU GOBIND SINGH ON PRAKASH PURAB



**Diary Times Desk :** President Droupadi Murmu and PM Narendra Modi led the nation in greeting people on the sacred occasion of Prakash Purab of Guru Gobind Singh.

"Warm greetings on the Prakash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji! He inspired people to live righteously, welding followers into a force that bravely faced adversaries to protect justice and self-respect. He symbolises grace amidst adversities and sacrifice for ideals. May his teachings guide humanity towards a harmonious society based on unity, compassion, and respect," said President Murmu in a post on X.

PM Modi wrote, "On the sacred Parkash Utsav, we bow to Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, an embodiment of courage, compassion, and sacrifice. His life and teachings inspire us to stand for truth, justice, and human dignity. His vision guides generations towards service and selfless duty." He also shared pictures from his visit to Takht Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib earlier this year, where he also had darshan of the Holy Jore Sahib of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Kaur. BJP president JP Nadda and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge also greeted people on the occasion.

## EDITORIAL

Drones have already revolutionized warfare.

They're about to do it again

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

But the Goliaths have caught up, while – according to one report – drug cartels the world over are innovating, improving and adapting drones to fight the narco-wars of the future.

"It's like gunpowder. That's how insanely it's changed the war," Patrick Shepherd, a former US Army officer, said of the advent of cheap aerial drones.

It's invention from chaos, as myriad regional conflagrations coincide with an era of unparalleled technological advance. It's probably just the beginning.

#### The evolution of drones

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

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

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



## Australia's About To Find Out

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



**Hilary Whiteman**

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

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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INFA

## A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### A blue school bag

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## A TALE OF THREE HOUSES AND ONE FAMILY: MAGNIFICENT JEWELLERY FROM THE WIMBORNE FAMILY COLLECTION

**Diary Times Desk :** In 1918, the MP for Plymouth, Ivor Churchill Guest (1873-1939), was raised to the title of Viscount Wimborne of Canford Magna — a noble rank between a baron and an earl, named after his estate in the county of Dorset.

He was the eldest son of Ivor Bertie Guest, 1st Baron Wimborne (1835-1914), and the grandson of Sir Josiah John Guest, 1st Baronet Dowlais (1785-1852), a Welsh industrialist who had grown the family's modest foundry in Merthyr Tydfil into the largest producer of iron in the world.

Over the course of the 20th century, the title of viscount passed down through three generations of male heirs: first Ivor Grosvenor Guest (1903-1967), then Ivor Fox-Strangways Guest (1939-1993), and finally to Ivor Mervyn Vigors Guest (b. 1968), the 4th — and current — Viscount Wimborne.

Thanks to the way the United Kingdom's peerage system works, he is also the 6th Baronet Guest, the 5th Baron Wimborne and the 4th Baron Ashby St Ledgers.

The current viscount is a passionate ecologist and successful, Grammy-nominated record producer, perhaps best known for his work with Grace Jones and Beyoncé. In April 2025, more than 50 lots once belonging to Viscount Wimborne and his family were sold at Christie's in London, followed by additional lots from the family's estates including paintings by George Stubbs and Michele Marieschi, Louis XV ormolu-mounted Chinese porcelain vases and a Louis XVI bureau by Jean-Henri Riesener in July.

Until 25 November 2025, magnificent jewellery from the Wimborne family collection will be offered online in the London Jewels sale. Several of these jewels were worn by Alice, Viscountess Wimborne (1880-1948), in two wonderful portraits by the celebrated British photographer Sir Cecil Beaton. Sir John and Lady Charlotte were the first serious collectors in the Guest family. Having turned Dowlais ironworks into an immensely successful business, in 1846 the couple purchased Canford Manor, a sprawling Dorset estate first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086.



## MAX N. BERRY SHARES HIS MAXIMS FOR BUILDING COLLECTIONS THROUGH CURIOSITY AND CONNOISSEURSHIP

**Diary Times Desk :**

Collector, connoisseur, patron: Max N. Berry's commitment to art reflects both an insatiable curiosity and a discerning eye. A lifelong student, he cultivated close relationships with experts in the field and was driven by both instinct and rigor. He built exceptional collections spanning diverse categories, from Chinese ceramics of the Han and Tang dynasties to the radical experiments of European modernism and important works of American art and Judaica.

Max Berry also knows a thing or two about magic. Interested in the subject since the age of eight, the accomplished international trade attorney would put on magic shows for charities and birthday parties for family and friends. Reading into the history of the craft, he became intrigued by sixth- and seventh-century magic traditions from China, India, and Japan.

This whimsical interest from the lawyer who served in the US Army's Judge Advocate General Corps in the Pentagon where he contributed to historic cases relating to the Nuremberg Tribunals; chaired the successful Walter Fauntroy campaign for non-voting representative for D.C. to Congress (the first election in modern D.C. history); the two successful campaigns for D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams; and was appointed by President Carter to chair the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, might seem incongruous to some. But those who know Berry know that his interests are extensive and deep-seated.

Following the sale of record-breaking works by Alexander Calder and major sculptures by Alberto Giacometti in November, COLLECTOR/CONNOISSEUR: The Max N. Berry Collections continues into 2026 with auctions that highlight the full breadth of his expertise: Open through December 22, a private selling exhibition showcases select Hanukkah lamps from Berry's renowned Judaica collection. In January 2026, works from Berry's American art collection, one of the most important still in private hands, come to Christie's Americana Week, which this year celebrates the 250th anniversary of the United States. The Berry works will be offered in a dedicated evening sale, day sale, and two online sales. Selections from his singular collection of Chinese works of art will be offered during Asian Art Week in March 2026.



## BARCELONA WILL BEGIN 2026 WITH A FRANTIC FIXTURE SCHEDULE SPREAD ACROSS FOUR COMPETITIONS



**Diary Times Desk :** Having ended their run in 2025 on a winning note against Villarreal, FC Barcelona will kick off new year in a few days, when they take on RCD Espanyol in the Catalan derby. The Catalans managed to go into the mid-season break on the back of a strong run of results, which put them at the top of La Liga, took them through to the Round of 16 in the Copa del Rey, while a late push for a top-eight finish in the Champions League remains possible. But the start of 2026 will be anything but easy for the reigning Spanish champions. Indeed, in just five days, a demanding 2026 will begin for Barcelona. The Catalan giants will compete in four different competitions during the first month of the year, playing between seven and eight matches and accumulating many kilometres in their legs. The squad are currently enjoying a week of holiday, but they have been called back to training on Monday afternoon. La Liga will be the competition with which Barcelona open 2026, on the 3rd of January, as the Blaugrana will play the Catalan derby at the RCDE Stadium.

### NEYMAR 'REMEMBERS' BARCELONA AMID RECOVERY FROM KNEE SURGERY

**Diary Times Desk :** It has been many years since Neymar left Barcelona for Paris Saint-Germain in a world-record transfer, but the emotional bond between the Brazilian and the Catalan club has never truly faded.

Even now, long after his Camp Nou chapter closed, Barcelona continues to occupy a special place in Neymar's heart. Notably, the former Barça forward is currently going through a difficult period in his career.

After struggling for nearly a year with a meniscus injury, Neymar recently underwent knee surgery and is expected to remain sidelined for the next two or three months.

It is another frustrating setback for a player whose career in recent seasons has been repeatedly interrupted by physical problems. During this enforced break from football, Neymar has chosen to slow things down and spend time with his family. Interestingly, a recent story on his Instagram offered a telling glimpse into his current state of mind. The image showed Neymar relaxing in a swimming pool alongside his father. In the background, a television screen displayed Neymar wearing a Barcelona shirt.

### BARCELONA'S GROWING MESS IN KEY DEPARTMENT IS BECOMING IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE

**Diary Times Desk :** While Barcelona continue to plan for the 2026/27 season and explore new signings, there is one issue the club can no longer afford to ignore, which is the growing chaos surrounding their goalkeeping department.

At present, Barcelona are operating with three top-level goalkeepers in the first-team environment. Joan Garcia has emerged as a key figure, while Marc-Andre ter Stegen remains under contract and determined to defend his position.

Alongside them is Wojciech Szczęsny, whose short-term future is less problematic, as the former Poland international would not oppose the club's decision should Barcelona opt not to renew his contract beyond the current season. As reported by SPORT, the real complication lies beneath the surface.

Inaki Pena renewed his contract until 2027 before heading out on loan to Elche, and he is expected to return next summer. It is said that he could stay on as the second-choice goalkeeper, although strong offers are likely to arrive. A sale could benefit all parties, but no decision has been made.

### LIVERPOOL, BAYERN MUNICH JOIN BARCELONA IN HUNT FOR IN-DEMAND BUNDESLIGA DEFENDER

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona's plans to strengthen their defence have suffered a clear setback, with a new report from CER revealing that competition for Nico Schlotterbeck is intensifying. According to the update, the likes of Liverpool and Bayern Munich have now entered the race, significantly complicating Barcelona's pursuit of the Borussia Dortmund defender. Barcelona's interest in Schlotterbeck is not new. The club has been actively studying the market for a top-level centre-back, but a January move has already been ruled out.

Instead, the Blaugrana are working with a longer-term plan, targeting the summer of 2026 to make a decisive defensive signing. Within that strategy, Schlotterbeck has emerged as one of the most highly rated options on the internal shortlist. The reasoning is straightforward. Schlotterbeck is widely viewed as a defender capable of anchoring the back line of a team competing for the Champions League. At present, Borussia Dortmund are not seen as clear favourites for Europe's biggest prize, and that context has placed the German international's future under the spotlight.



### BARCELONA'S 18-YEAR-OLD ACADEMY TALENT AN OPTION FOR FLICK TO BOLSTER DEFENCE AMID KEY ABSENCES

**Diary Times Desk :** The absence of Andreas Christensen has created a serious dilemma for Barcelona at a crucial point of the season. With the Danish international ruled out until the end of the campaign and uncertainty still surrounding the return of Ronald Araujo, Barcelona's defensive structure has been left dangerously exposed.

For Hansi Flick, reinforcing the centre-back position is no longer optional, it has become essential. Much has been written about Barcelona's search for short-term solutions in the January transfer window, but the reality is far less encouraging. Options that are affordable, available, and convincing from a sporting point of view are extremely limited. Flick is not prepared to sign a player simply to fill numbers, especially in a role as delicate as central defence. This is precisely why, according to SPORT, Flick is once again looking inward rather than outward. Since arriving at Barcelona, the German coach has repeatedly shown a willingness to trust La Masia when the market fails to offer the right answers. That philosophy could now come into play once more.

### FORMER BARCELONA DIRECTOR LAUDS STAR MIDFIELDER: 'HAS ALL THE MAKINGS OF A BALLON D'OR WINNER'

**Diary Times Desk :** Ramon Planes was a crucial figure at Barcelona during his short stint at the club. Serving as the sporting director, Planes made some important moves. One of those moves was to sign a certain Pedri, who has now established himself as one of the best midfielders in world football.

In a recent interview with Onda Cero, Planes talked about the Saudi Arabian league, as he is currently the sporting director of Al Ittihad, and how they could potentially feature in the Champions League in the future. But he also spoke about Pedri, notably dishing out praise on the Barcelona midfielder, who is thriving under Hansi Flick. Although Planes spoke about Pedri briefly, he did not shy away from praising the Spanish international, notably labelling him as Ballon d'Or material. "He has all the makings of a Ballon d'Or winner," said Planes (h/t MARCA), who had played a key role in convincing Barcelona to sign the player from Las Palmas. Since then, the midfielder has appeared in 221 competitive matches for Barcelona, even recently breaking Lionel Messi's record for being the youngest ever Barcelona player to make 150 La Liga appearances for the club.