

NEWS IN BRIEF

**CIVIL AVIATION
MINISTRY'S 24X7
CONTROL ROOM SEEKS
TO ADDRESS
PASSENGERS' ISSUES
PROMPTLY**

Diary Times Desk :

To address air travellers' grievances more promptly, the civil aviation ministry has set up the Passenger Assistance Control Room (PACR) that functions round-the-clock to resolve the issues.

Officials from the ministry, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), airlines and Airports Authority of India (AAI), are among those working at the centre, which monitors operations, attends to passenger calls and coordinates real-time assistance.

The PACR or the control room was operationalised on December 10 in the wake of the operational disruptions at IndiGo. Besides, there have been flight disruptions and delays due to fog and other issues. Elaborating on the control room, Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha said there has been a marked improvement in grievance redressal and there has been a positive response from air passengers and other stakeholders. According to the ministry, air travellers' grievances.

**HEAVY WINTER
TOURIST RUSH IN
SIKKIM; OVER 6,000
VISIT NATHULA-
TSOMGO IN A DAY**

Diary Times Desk : Sikkim is witnessing a surge in tourist arrivals during the winter season, with several popular destinations reporting near-capacity occupancy, officials said on Sunday. Hotels and homestays in tourist hubs such as Lachung in North Sikkim are fully booked, while Lachen and Gurudongmar Lake remain closed to visitors since June this year, they said. In East Sikkim, destinations including Tsomgo Lake, Nathula Pass, and Zuluk have recorded heavy footfall since December 22. According to official data, as many as 1,516 tourist vehicles visited Tsomgo, Baba Mandir and Nathula Pass on December 28, reflecting the scale of the seasonal rush. On the same day, a total of 6,080 tourists, including domestic and foreign visitors, travelled to Nathula. The corresponding figure during the winter season last year stood at around 5,000.

PM MODI
NEWSMANN KI BAAT: PM MODI SAYS 2025 YEAR OF PROUD
MILESTONES FOR INDIA

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said 2025 was a year of proud milestones for India as he highlighted Operation Sindoor, saying it became a symbol of pride for every Indian and showed the world that the country does not compromise on its security.

Addressing his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' address, the last in 2025, Modi said the country's impact was visible everywhere in the outgoing year. "The year 2025 was one of proud milestones for India. Whether in national security, sports, scientific innovation or on the world's biggest platforms, India's impact was visible everywhere," he said.

The prime minister said that during Operation Sindoor, images of love and devotion towards 'Maa Bharti' (Mother India) emerged from every corner of the nation and people expressed their emotions and gratitude in their unique ways.

"Operation Sindoor became a symbol of pride for every Indian. The world witnessed clearly that today's India does not compromise on its security," he said. Modi said the same spirit was witnessed when national song 'Vande Mataram' completed 150 years.

"I had urged you to share your messages and suggestions using the hashtag #VandeMataram150, and our fellow citizens participated in this campaign with immense enthusiasm," he said. The prime minister noted that 2025 has truly been a memorable year for sports, with the men's cricket team clinching the ICC Champions Trophy and the women's cricket team winning the World Cup for the first time.

ORGANISATION SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED: SHASHI THAROOR
BACKS DIGVIJAYA'S VIEWS AMID CONTROVERSY

Diary Times Desk : Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Sunday came out in support of the views of his party colleague Digvijaya Singh, saying the organisation should be strengthened. At the 140th foundation day event at the Congress' Indira Bhawan headquarters, Tharoor was seated next to Digvijaya Singh and exchanged notes.

Ahead of the CWC meet on Saturday, Singh created a flutter by lauding the organisational power of RSS-BJP as he shared Narendra Modi's old picture and said how a grassroots worker went on to become the chief minister and prime minister by sitting at the feet of their leaders. He also raised the issue of strengthening the Congress organisation at the grassroots level, asserting it was much needed in the fight against the ruling BJP and to oust it from power.

A day later, Digvijaya Singh said he had already stated whatever he had to say. "For 50 years I have been with the Congress party, and I have fought these communal forces, whether in the assembly, parliament or in the organisation," he noted. "I have basic differences and am opposed to their ideology. I have and will continue to fight against such people," Singh claimed. When asked to comment on his Saturday's remarks, he said, "Every organisation needs strengthening. Tharoor, when asked to comment on the issue, said, "The organisation should be strengthened, there is no doubt." On being seated next to Singh and whether the two exchanged views on the matter, Tharoor said, "We keep talking with each other, we are friends and talk to each other."

ELON MUSK SLAMS CANADIAN HEALTHCARE
SYSTEM AFTER INDIAN-ORIGIN MAN DIES
FOLLOWING 8-HOUR HOSPITAL WAIT

Diary Times Desk : US billionaire Elon Musk criticised Canada's healthcare system following the tragic death of an Indian-origin man who waited more than eight hours for medical care at Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton, capital of Alberta province in northwest Canada. A video of the deceased's wife describing the ordeal recently went viral on social media, in which she demanded that the staff at the facility be held accountable, a media report said.

Prashant Sreekumar (44), 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. The hospital staff did an electrocardiogram (ECG), offered him some tylenol for his pain, but kept him waiting even as nurses checked Prashant's blood pressure. After more than eight hours, when Prashant was finally called into the treatment area, he died within seconds in what was apparently a cardiac arrest, local media said.

Responding to the incident, Musk shared a viral video of the victim's wife on X and wrote: "When the government does medical care, it is about as good as the DMV."

UNNAO RAPE CASE: SC TO HEAR CBI'S PLEA
AGAINST SUSPENSION OF KULDEEP SENGAR'S
SENTENCE ON MONDAY

Diary Times Desk : The Supreme Court will on Monday hear the CBI's petition challenging the Delhi High Court's order suspending the life sentence of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar and granting him bail in the 2017 Unnao rape case during the pendency of his appeal against his conviction.

According to the Supreme Court cause list for December 29 released on its website, the CBI's appeal against the December 23 order of the high court is listed before a three-judge Special Vacation Bench of CJI Surya Kant, Justice JK Maheshwari and Justice AG Masih.

The CBI has requested the top court to stay the order that has created an uproar. The top court will also take up another petition filed by advocates Anjale Patel and Pooja Shilpkar challenging the suspension of sentence and grant of bail to Sengar. They have contended that the high court passed the order without considering that the trial court had said that Sengar must remain in jail for the rest of his natural life. Crying foul over the Delhi High Court's order granting bail to Sengar, the victim on Saturday demanded that the CBI should register an FIR against the then-investigating officer for being "hand in glove" with Sengar. Holding that aggravated offence provisions under Section 5(c) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and Section 376(2) of the Indian Penal Code were not attracted in Sengar's case, as he could not be categorised as a "public servant" within the meaning.

IGMC SHIMLA

HIMACHAL DOCS DIVIDED AS
RESIDENT DOCTORS'
ASSOCIATION OF IGMC CALLS
OFF STRIKE

Diary Times Desk : The Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) of the Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC) and Hospital, Shimla, formally called off the strike on Sunday following an assurance by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, but a section of the doctors refused to abide by the decision.

The stalemate over the indefinite strike across the state seems to have been resolved only partially as a faction of the doctors is adamant on the revocation of the termination of Dr Raghav Nirula, accused of assaulting a patient at the IGMC.

"We are feeling very unsafe and vulnerable. We must be assured in writing that Dr Raghav's termination will be revoked and the safety of doctors ensured," said a resident doctor, who continued to protest outside the IGMC along with others. The decision by the RDA to call off the strike came after some tough talking by CM Sukhu, who categorically made it clear that channels for communication would open only once the doctors shed their "ego and call off the strike".

RDA president Dr Sohil Sharma and general secretary Dr Adarsh Sharma said following an assurance by the CM of a detailed inquiry into the incident, the strike had been called off.

2.89 CRORE NAMES DELETED
FROM UTTAR PRADESH DRAFT
VOTER LIST

Diary Times Desk : The draft electoral roll in Uttar Pradesh, which will be published on December 31, is likely to have the names of about 12.55 crore voters, with almost 2.89 crore names deleted from the pre-SIR voter list. Those excluded will have a chance to contest the deletion starting January 1, the state's chief electoral officer said on Sunday.

Among the 12,55,56,000 voters who have made it to the draft list, more than 1 crore are in the "unmapped" category, meaning notices will be sent out to them to furnish self-attested documents from among the list of the 12 mandated by the Election Commission (EC) to be moved into the "mapped" category, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Navdeep Rinwa told PTI.

The nearly 52-day Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, with 'Shuddh Nirvachak Namavali-Majboot Loktantra' (Clean Electoral Roll-Strong Democracy) as its theme, began in the state on November 4 and concluded after two extensions on December 26 with a pruned draft voter list.



ORGANISATION SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED: SHASHI THAROOR BACKS DIGVIJAYA'S VIEWS AMID CONTROVERSY



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MANN KI BAAT: PM MODI SAYS 2025 YEAR OF PROUD MILESTONES FOR INDIA



Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said 2025 was a year of proud milestones for India as he highlighted Operation Sindoor, saying it became a symbol of pride for every Indian and showed the world that the country does not compromise on its security. Addressing his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' address, the last in 2025, Modi said the country's impact was visible everywhere in the outgoing year. "The year 2025 was one of proud milestones for India. Whether in national security, sports, scientific innovation or on the world's biggest platforms, India's impact was visible everywhere," he said. The prime minister said that during Operation Sindoor, images of love and devotion towards 'Maa Bharti' (Mother India) emerged from every corner of the nation and people expressed their emotions and gratitude in their unique ways. "Operation Sindoor became a symbol of pride for every Indian. The world witnessed clearly that today's India does not compromise on its security," he said. Modi said the same spirit was witnessed when national song 'Vande Mataram' completed 150 years.

FATHER OF TRIPURA STUDENT KILLED IN 'RACIAL ATTACK' IN DEHRADUN SAYS POLICE DELAYED FIR

Diary Times Desk : The father of Angel Chakma, a student from Tripura who died here in Dehradun, said his son was "brutally attacked" with knives and blunt objects when he tried to defend his brother who faced racial slurs and was called "Chinese" by the attackers. Tarun Chakma, a BSF jawan currently posted in Tangjeng in Manipur, alleged that police initially refused to register a report about the incident involving his sons in the Selakui area and only filed an FIR two to three days later after pressure from the All India Chakma Students' Union and senior officers. The attackers called his sons "Chinese momo" and other racial slurs, the father of the victim told PTI over the phone. Angel told them that he "was also Indian, not Chinese" but they attacked him with knives and blunt objects, the devastated father said. Angel Chakma, an MBA student at a private university here, died on Friday after fighting for his life for 17 days in the hospital.

BSF, MEGHALAYA POLICE REJECT BANGLADESH'S CLAIM ON HADI KILLERS ENTERING INDIA

Diary Times Desk : Security agencies in Meghalaya on Sunday dismissed claims by the Bangladesh Police that the killers of Inquilab Moncho leader Sharif Osman Hadi had entered the state. The claims are unfounded and misleading, BSF chief in Meghalaya, Inspector General O P Opadhyay said. A top Dhaka Metropolitan Police officer earlier in the day said that two primary suspects in the Hadi murder case have crossed into Meghalaya via the Haluaghat border "with the help of local associates". "There is no evidence to suggest that any individual crossed the international border from the Haluaghat sector into Meghalaya. The BSF has neither detected nor received any report of such an incident," Opadhyay said. A senior Meghalaya police officer also said that there was "no input or intelligence to corroborate" the claim of the suspects' presence in the Garo Hills region. The officer said local police units had not detected any such movement and coordination with central agencies was ongoing. BSF officials said that the personnel deployed along the international border have been kept on a high state of alert at all times to avert any untoward incident, particularly in view of the unrest and volatile situation prevailing in the neighbouring country. The force reiterated that the international border in the sector was under constant surveillance and any attempt at illegal cross-border movement would be promptly detected and dealt with.

JUP CHIEF HUMAYUN KABIR'S SON
DETAINED FOR ASSAULTING COP;
MLA ALLEGES POLITICAL VENDETTA
BY TMC

Diary Times Desk : Janata Unnayan Party (JUP) chief Humayun Kabir's son Golam Nabi Azad was on Sunday detained for allegedly attacking a policeman posted at their residence in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, an officer said. Trinamool Congress said Azad, better known as Sohel, committed a cognisable offence by raising a hand on the policeman, who was posted as a personal security officer (PSO) of Bharatpur MLA Kabir, and police took action as per the law, while claiming that the ruling party has nothing to do with it. A senior police officer said Sohel was detained on the basis of a complaint lodged with Shaktipur police station by Constable Jumma Khan, alleging that the legislator's son assaulted him this morning when he applied for a few days' leave. "On the basis of the complaint, the accused has been detained for questioning. The matter is being investigated, and necessary legal action will be taken," the police officer told PTI. Kabir, who floated his party after being suspended from the TMC and laid the foundation stone for a Babri Masjid-style mosque in Muslim-majority Murshidabad, claimed that police have cordoned off his residence in Shaktipur area following the incident.

MESSI EVENT CHAOS: COURT
EXTENDS POLICE CUSTODY OF
CHIEF ORGANISER SATADRU
DUTTA TILL JAN 9

Diary Times Desk : A court in West Bengal on Sunday extended till January 9 the police custody of Satadru Dutta, the chief organiser of Argentine footballer Lionel Messi's event that dissolved into disorder earlier this month. After the completion of his initial police custody, Dutta was produced before the Bidhannagar Sub-Divisional Court, where public prosecutors levelled multiple charges against him. Dutta, who was arrested on December 13 over alleged mismanagement in the Salt Lake stadium event on that day, was also accused of entering into contracts with food and beverage suppliers without prior government approval and being involved in alleged corruption amounting to Rs 23 crore. The prosecution emphasised that Dutta wields significant influence, and for this reason, he should not be granted bail. "The investigation requires further probe into the financial transactions and pre-planned arrangements for the event. His bail plea was rejected, and he (Dutta) was sent to police custody till January 9," a senior police officer told reporters outside.

DOCUMENTATION ERROR: 3 KANPUR HOSPITAL
STAFF MEMBERS SUSPENDED FOR DECLARING LIVING
PATIENT DEAD



Diary Times Desk : Three staff members of Lala Lajpat Rai Hospital in Kanpur, including a junior resident doctor and a nurse, were suspended after a living patient was erroneously declared dead on paper, prompting initiation of post-mortem formalities, an official said. The mistake came to light on Saturday evening when police personnel arrived at the Medicine Ward to shift the body to the mortuary, only to find the patient alive, Sanjay Kala, principal of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Medical College under which the hospital is run, told PTI. "A three-member inquiry committee has been constituted to probe the incident. The committee — consisting of vice-principal Richa Agarwal, chief medical superintendent Saurabh Agarwal and superintendent-in-charge Rakesh Singh — has been directed to submit a fact-finding report within 48 hours. Strict action will be taken based on the findings," Kala said.

ISRO AIMS TO COMMISSION THIRD LAUNCH
PAD AT SHRIHARIKOTA IN 4 YEARS, SAYS
TOP SCIENTIST

Diary Times Desk : ISRO is in the process of developing a third launch pad at the Shriharikota spaceport and is currently identifying the right vendors for it, a top scientist said. Shriharikota complex, which covers an area of 175 sq km, is located about 135 km east of Chennai. It has been serving the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency for the launch of various satellites using different launch vehicles. To move ahead with its plan of placing bigger satellites weighing over 12,000-14,000 kg in various orbits in space, ISRO requires bigger launch vehicles, Padmakumar ES, the Director and Distinguished Scientist of Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Shriharikota, said. To serve this purpose, ISRO is planning a third launch pad, he said. "We plan to develop, install and commission a third launch pad in four years. Activities are going on for that," he told PTI in a recent interaction. "We are starting the procurement phase."

DELHI RECORDS 'VERY POOR' AQI;
MET ISSUES ORANGE ALERT FOR
DENSE FOG ON MONDAY

Diary Times Desk : The national capital recorded air quality in the "very poor" category on Sunday with an overall Air Quality Index reading of 390, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The meteorological department has issued an orange alert of very dense fog for Monday, with maximum and minimum temperatures likely to hover around 22 and 7°C, respectively. According to data on the CPCB's Sameer App, 19 monitoring stations in Delhi reported air quality in the "severe" category with Anand Vihar recording highest AQI of 457, while the remaining recorded "very poor" levels. An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered "good", 51 to 100 "satisfactory", 101 to 200 "moderate", 201 to 300 "poor", 301 to 400 "very poor", and 401 to 500 "severe", according to CPCB standards.

The city recorded a low of 6.3°C, 0.5 degrees below the season's average, while the maximum temperature settled at 22.5°C, 2.1 notches above the seasonal average, the meteorological department said.

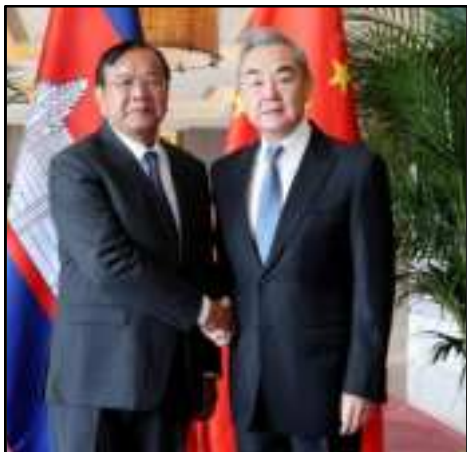
PRESIDENT MURMU UNDERTAKES
SUBMARINE SORTIE AT KARWAR NAVAL
BASE

Diary Times Desk : President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday undertook a sortie on board Indian Navy's indigenously-built frontline submarine INS Vaghsheer on the Western Seaboard. Murmu is the second President to undertake a submarine sortie. In February 2006, APJ Abdul Kalam experienced a submarine sortie on board INS Sindhu Rakshak. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi accompanied President Murmu, who is also the Supreme Commander of the armed forces, during the sortie in the Kalvari class submarine from the Karwar naval base in Karnataka, officials said. The President, donning a naval uniform, waved at naval personnel before entering the submarine. She also interacted with the crew of INS Vaghsheer and lauded their dedication, while describing the indigenous submarine as a shining example of the Indian Navy's professional excellence and combat preparedness. "President Droupadi Murmu undertook a dived sortie on the Western Seaboard."

PHOTOGRAPH WITH BUDDHIST STUPAS FOUND IN FRANCE REVEALS
KASHMIR'S GLORIOUS PAST: PM MODI

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said an old, blurry photograph of three Buddhist stupas of Baramulla found in France has revealed Kashmir's glorious past dating back nearly two thousand years. In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio address, Modi said large human-made structures were discovered in Jammu and Kashmir, a development which "will fill you up with pride" regarding its cultural and historical heritage. For years, people had been seeing some tall mounds in Baramullah's Zehnpora, he said. These were ordinary mounds, and no one knew what they were and one day, an archaeologist noticed them, he said. The prime minister said the archaeologist began to observe the area carefully and these mounds appeared somewhat unusual. Following this, he said, a scientific study of these mounds began and drones were used to take photographs from above, and the land was mapped. "And then some surprising things started to emerge. It turned out that these mounds weren't natural. They were the remains of a large human-made structure," he said. Meanwhile, Modi said, another interesting connection emerged.



BORDER DISPUTE: THAILAND, CAMBODIAN TOP DIPLOMATS MEET IN CHINA TO SOLIDIFY CEASEFIRE

Diary Times Desk : Top diplomats from Thailand and Cambodia kicked off two days of talks in China on Sunday as Beijing seeks to strengthen its role in mediating the two countries' border dispute, a day after they signed a new ceasefire.

The ceasefire agreement signed on Saturday calls for a halt to weeks of fighting along their contested border that has killed more than 100 people and displaced over half a million people in both countries. Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow and Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn were set to meet in China's southwestern Yunnan province for talks mediated by their Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. The talks aim to ensure a sustained ceasefire and promote lasting peace between the countries, according to a statement by Sihasak's office. Wang was scheduled to join both bilateral meetings with each of the diplomats and a trilateral talk on Monday. China has welcomed the ceasefire announcement, which freezes the front lines and allows for displaced civilians to return to their homes near the border. "China stands ready to continue to provide the platform and create conditions for Cambodia and Thailand to have fuller and more detailed communication," a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement read. The ceasefire agreement comes with a 72-hour observation period, at the end of which Thailand agreed to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers it has held as prisoners since earlier fighting in July. Their release has been a major demand of the Cambodian side.

ELON MUSK SLAMS CANADIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AFTER INDIAN-ORIGIN MAN DIES FOLLOWING 8-HOUR HOSPITAL WAIT

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**ZELENSKY CALLS PUTIN 'A MAN OF WAR' AFTER RUSSIA'S DEADLY ATTACK ON KYIV**

Diary Times Desk : After Russia unleashed a fresh wave of strikes on Kyiv and nearby regions, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has called Russian leader Vladimir Putin a "man of war". Speaking in Halifax, Nova Scotia, alongside Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, Zelensky linked the prolonged assault to Russia's intentions, a day before his meeting with US President Donald Trump in Florida. "We want peace," Zelensky said. "And he's a man of war." Zelensky made a stop in Canada as he prepared for talks with Trump on Sunday in Florida, where he is expected to present a 20-point peace plan aimed at ending the nearly four-year-long conflict. Trump has earlier stated that any peace proposal would require his "approval". During his stopover, Zelensky held discussions with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, as well as leaders from NATO and the European Union.

CHINA WELCOMES THAILAND-CAMBODIA TRUCE AHEAD OF TRILATERAL TALKS

Diary Times Desk : China on Sunday congratulated Cambodia on reaching a ceasefire with Thailand after weeks of deadly border fighting, as officials from the three countries prepared to open a two-day meeting in southwestern China. Thailand and Cambodia on Saturday ended weeks of fierce border clashes that killed at least 101 people and displaced more than half a million by agreeing their second ceasefire in recent months. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in a meeting with his Cambodian counterpart, called the ceasefire "an important step towards restoring peace" and said it was "in line with the shared expectations of countries in the region." Cambodia's top diplomat, Prak Sokhonn, and his Thai counterpart, Sihasak Phuangketkeow, are both expected to meet Wang in the Chinese province of Yunnan on Sunday and Monday to discuss the border situation. Cambodia and Thailand should "promote a complete and lasting ceasefire, resume normal exchanges and rebuild mutual trust" Wang said.

INDIA ATTACKED NUR KHAN AIRBASE IN MAY: PAKISTAN'S DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DAR

Diary Times Desk : Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has admitted that India attacked its Nur Khan airbase in the early hours of May 10, in possibly a first-time admission eight months after the four-day armed conflict between the two countries. Dar also said that Islamabad did not request mediation between Pakistan and India during the May conflict, but claimed that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan expressed a desire to speak with New Delhi. India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes between the two countries and ended with an understanding to stop the military actions on May 10. "As many as 79 of 80 drones sent by India were intercepted within 36 hours. India then made the mistake of attacking the Nur Khan Airbase in the early hours of May 10, prompting Pakistan's retaliatory operation," Dar, who is also the foreign minister, said while outlining Pakistan's diplomatic engagements in 2025.

2 SUSPECTS IN YOUTH LEADER HADI'S MURDER CASE FLED TO INDIA, CLAIM BANGLADESH POLICE

Diary Times Desk : Two primary suspects in the murder of Inquilab Moncho leader Sharif Osman Hadi have fled Bangladesh and are believed to be currently in India, a top Dhaka Metropolitan Police officer said Sunday. Hadi, 32, was shot in the head on December 12 during an election campaign in Dhaka. He was airlifted to Singapore for advanced treatment but died of his injuries on December 18.

"The suspects, Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Sheikh, crossed into the Indian state of Meghalaya with the help of local associates," Additional Police Commissioner (Crime and Operations) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) S N Md Nazrul Islam told a press conference at the DMP Media Centre.

"According to our information, the suspects entered India via the Haluaghat border. After crossing, they were initially received by an individual named Purti. Later, a taxi driver named Sami transported them to Tura city in Meghalaya," The Daily Star said, quoting Islam. The DMP officer did not, however, mention when the two escaped to India. There is no reaction by Indian officials to the report as yet.

BANGLADESH'S EX-PM KHALEDA ZIA IN 'EXTREMELY CRITICAL' CONDITION, SAYS DOCTOR

Diary Times Desk : Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia is in an "extremely critical" condition, her personal physician has said. Zia, the 80-year-old chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka's Evercare Hospital since November 23 for multiple health complications. On December 11, she was placed on "ventilator support to give rest to her lungs and other vital organs."

"It cannot be said that her condition has improved. She is passing through an extremely critical phase," Dr AZM Zahid said during a briefing held shortly after midnight on Saturday outside Evercare Hospital, without prior notice. He also urged the nation to pray for Zia's recovery, news portal bdnews24.com reported. "If, by Allah's mercy, she can get through this critical period, we may hear something positive," Zahid said. Her son and BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman spent more than two hours at the hospital before leaving shortly before midnight, party members said.

Both local and foreign physicians are involved in Zia's care, with her daughter-in-law, Dr Zubaida Rahman, also actively participating in the treatment process. The BNP has previously indicated that it would prefer Zia to be taken abroad for advanced medical treatment. However, her current physical condition does not allow for air travel, so her treatment continues in the country.



DECISIONS ON PEACE DEPEND ON KYIV'S PARTNERS: ZELENSKYY

Diary Times Desk : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday that Kyiv was doing everything to end its war with Russia but that ultimately securing peace would depend on its partners.

"These are some of the most active diplomatic days of the year, and much can be resolved before the New Year, and we are doing everything for this, but whether there will be decisions depends on the partners," he wrote on the Telegram app in comments before talks in Florida with US President Donald Trump.

He added that Ukraine's partners should increase pressure on Moscow "so that the Russians feel the consequences of their own aggression".

"ISOLATED CRIMINAL ACTS": BANGLADESH DOWNPLAYS INDIA'S CONCERNS OVER ATTACKS ON MINORITIES

Diary Times Desk : Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday "rejected" India's concerns over attacks on minorities in the country, claiming that the statements made by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) do not reflect the ground reality. The response came after India raised concerns following reports of violence against minorities in Bangladesh. "Our attention has been drawn to the recent comments made by the Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs of India regarding the situation of the minority communities in Bangladesh. His comments do not reflect the facts. The Government of Bangladesh categorically rejects any inaccurate, exaggerated, or motivated narratives that misrepresent Bangladesh's longstanding tradition of communal harmony," the statement from the Bangladesh foreign ministry read. The Ministry further alleged that criminal incidents were being selectively portrayed as targeted persecution of minorities. "With much regret, we note that there are systematic attempts to portray the isolated incidents of criminal acts as systemic persecution of the Hindus and maliciously used to propagate anti-Bangladesh sentiments in different parts of India. We observe a selective.



BRIGITTE BARDOT, ICON OF FRENCH CINEMA, DIES AT 91

Diary Times Desk : Actress Brigitte Bardot shot to international fame dancing the mambo barefoot in "And God Created Woman", her tousled hair and fierce energy radiating a sexual magnetism rarely before seen in mainstream cinema.

A global icon was born. At just 21, she scandalised censors and captivated audiences. Her free-spirited performance in the 1956 film, shot by her husband Roger Vadim, marked a decisive break from the demure heroines of the previous era.

Brigitte Bardot, often referred to in France simply as "B.B." and whose later years were marked by animal rights campaigns and far-right political sympathies, has died at the age of 91, her foundation said on Sunday. The cause was not immediately known. Born in Paris on September 28, 1934, Bardot grew up in an upper-middle-class household. She described herself as a shy, self-conscious child who "wore spectacles and had lank hair". By 15, however, she graced the cover of Elle magazine, launching a modelling career that soon led to film.

MOSCOW'S RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN ATTACK WILL BE DEVASTATING: RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

Diary Times Desk : Russia does not intend to attack anyone in Europe, but its response to any strike will be devastating, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Sunday, noting the EU's "war party" has become a stumbling block in Ukraine peace efforts.

Lavrov's warning came on a day Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is scheduled to meet with US President Donald Trump at the latter's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

"My message for European politicians who seem to have problems getting to grips with this fact is to repeat one more time that there is no need to be afraid of Russia attacking anyone," Lavrov said in an interview with state-run news agency TASS. "However, should anyone consider attacking Russia, they would face a devastating blow," Lavrov added. As Zelenskyy is set to meet Trump with his peace plan backed by key European powers, who according to media reports, insist on deployment of European troops as part of security guarantees for Kiev, Lavrov said they will be a 'legitimate target' for Russia. "Whether leaders like (EU chief) Ursula von der Leyen, (German Chancellor) Friedrich Merz, (UK prime minister) Keir Starmer and (French President) Emmanuel Macron and the like have reached a point of no return is hard to say.

"COULD HAVE STAYED IN MUMBAI": US INFLUENCER MOCKS DEATH OF INDIAN-ORIGIN MAN IN CANADA

Diary Times Desk : Racist and derogatory social media posts by American influencer Andrew Branca have triggered widespread outrage following the death of an Indian-origin accountant, Prashant Sreekumar, in Canada after allegedly waiting more than eight hours for medical care at an Edmonton hospital.

Reacting to reports on the death of Prashant Sreekumar, Andrew Branca took to X to mock the incident, referring to the deceased as "another Indian invader of Canada." In the same post, he claimed, "I note that she and her husband could have easily avoided the shitty Canadian healthcare by staying in Mumbai and enjoying the shitty Indian healthcare," while also sharing an unsourced graph showing net immigration to Canada from 1952 to 2025. Branca's X bio states that he is an attorney offering "pro-America, pro-Constitution, pro-Western civilisation political and legal analysis." However, a review of his past posts shows repeated use of abusive language against India and Indians. He has previously referred to Indians as "retards" and "third-world," labelled Indian food as "disgusting," and stated that "America is for Americans."



'SPEARHEAD' BRIGADE ENDS MORE THAN 100 DAYS ON COMBAT LINE

Diary Times Desk : After reporting to the reserves since the beginning of the war and operating in Gaza, Lebanon, and now in Syria, forces of the IDF's (Israel Defence Forces) 55th "Spearhead" Brigade have completed more than 100 days of operation in the region and their mission.

They have been operating for the past three months in the defence of the Golan Heights and in the security area in southern Syria.

During the activity in the sector, the brigade forces completed dozens of proactive activities that affected the sense of security of the residents of the Golan Heights.

The brigade forces will be replaced in the coming days by another reserve brigade forces that will continue their activities in the southern Syria and Golan Heights area.

ISRAEL RELEASES FOOTAGE OF HAMAS' ATTACK FROM OCT 7, 2023

Diary Times Desk : The Israel Defence Forces on Sunday released footage of Hamas' brutal acts during October 7, 2023, massacre.

The IDF released the footage after Hamas claimed that they did not target civilians during those attacks. In a post on X, the IDF said, "Hamas released a 42-page document claiming it did not target civilians during the Oct 7 Massacre. It denies the murder of civilians, the killing of children, and sexual violence, while rejecting documented facts. This footage shows a fraction of Hamas' brutal actions during the massacre and was released for publication over two years ago. It shows what Hamas now denies. These are not allegations. These are documented events." Hamas published its version of the October 7 massacre, titled "Our Narrative... Al-Aqsa Flood: Two Years of Steadfastness and the Will for Liberation," on Wednesday, as per The Jerusalem Post.

SUSPECT IN JERUSALEM CAR RAMMING OF POLICE OFFICER ARRESTED

Diary Times Desk : Jerusalem Police officers arrested a resident of eastern Jerusalem suspected of hitting a police officer during a traffic enforcement operation in the Atarot area in northern Jerusalem and fleeing the scene on foot.

The driver's vehicle aroused the suspicion of the police operating the traffic enforcement and they acted to stop it.

At a certain point, the vehicle's driver began to flee the scene, accelerating in a reckless and dangerous manner, hit a police officer who was operating at the location, exited the vehicle, and fled on foot.

As a result of the incident, the officer was slightly injured and evacuated to receive medical treatment at the hospital. Central Unit traffic police together with additional forces that arrived quickly at the scene--and began what the police described as "extensive searches" for the suspect and, within a short time, a suspect was arrested by police forces along with several additional suspects. There is no word yet if this was a terror attack or a criminally motivated one.

CHINA ACCUSED OF WEAPONISING AI TO UNDERMINE TAIWAN'S DEMOCRACY

Diary Times Desk : New revelations have raised serious concerns over China's alleged use of artificial intelligence to interfere in Taiwan's democratic processes, with investigators warning that sophisticated digital tools are being deployed to influence public opinion ahead of upcoming elections.

According to findings, internal documents from a Chinese technology firm point to a coordinated strategy aimed at manipulating political discourse in Taiwan and Hong Kong, as reported by The Taipei Times.

According to The Taipei Times, the documents, obtained by the Institute of National Security at Vanderbilt University, detail the operations of GoLaxy, a company believed to have close links with Chinese state institutions. The firm reportedly developed advanced AI-driven systems capable of monitoring online conversations, mapping public sentiment, and identifying influential social media users to shape political narratives. These tools allegedly go beyond simple data analysis. The report states that the technology can generate highly realistic online.

ZELENSKY, TRUMP TO HOLD HIGH-STAKES PEACE TALKS IN FLORIDA AMID INTENSIFYING RUSSIAN STRIKES ON KYIV



Diary Times Desk : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is scheduled to meet US President Donald Trump later today at Mar-a-Lago, even as Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, came under fresh Russian missile and drone attacks, underlining that hostilities continue alongside intensified diplomatic efforts to end the war.

The meeting, set for 1:00 pm ET (11:30 pm IST), was announced only two days ago and is aimed at narrowing differences in a peace framework first proposed by Trump last month, CNN reported. Ukraine has since revised the original 28-point proposal to 20 points, with US envoys working intensively to shape a plan that could be acceptable to both Kyiv and Moscow. Trump, who has been in Palm Beach since December 20, will pause his holiday break to hold the talks. The meeting was arranged after Zelenskyy held an hour-long phone call last week with Steve Witkoff, Trump's foreign envoy, and Jared Kushner, who is involved in finalising the peace proposal, according to CNN. Earlier this month, Trump had indicated that talks with Zelenskyy or European leaders would only be useful if negotiations were nearing a breakthrough, signalling what US officials describe as an advanced stage of discussions. American officials have said substantial progress has been made, with one US official stating that about 90 per cent of the deal's terms had been settled, a figure Zelenskyy publicly confirmed on Friday.

MYANMAR JUNTA HOLDS ELECTIONS AFTER 5 YEARS OF CIVIL WAR



Diary Times Desk : A trickle of voters made their way to Myanmar's heavily restricted polls on Sunday, with the ruling junta touting the exercise as a return to democracy five years after it ousted the last elected government, triggering civil war.

Former civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains jailed, while her hugely popular party has been dissolved and was not taking part. Campaigners, Western diplomats and the UN's rights chief have all condemned the phased month-long vote, citing a ballot stacked with military allies and a stark crackdown on dissent. The pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party is widely expected to emerge as the largest one, in what critics say would be a rebranding of martial rule.

The Southeast Asian nation of around 50 million is riven by civil war, and there will be no voting in rebel-held areas. In junta-controlled territory, the first of three rounds started at 6:00 am (2330 GMT Saturday), including in constituencies in the cities of Yangon, Mandalay and the capital Naypyidaw. "The election is very important and will bring the best for the country," said Bo Saw, the first voter at a polling station in Yangon's Kamayut Township near Aung San Suu Kyi's vacant home.

IRAN PRESIDENT SAYS US, ISRAEL, EUROPE WAGING 'FULL-FLEDGED WAR' ON COUNTRY

Diary Times Desk : Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian says that the United States, Israel and Europe are waging a "full-fledged war" against his country. The president's remarks on Saturday came ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting on Monday with US President Donald Trump. They also come six months after Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran, and after France, Germany and the United Kingdom reimposed United Nations sanctions on Iran in September over its nuclear programme. "In my opinion, we are in a full-fledged war with America, Israel and Europe. They do not want our country to stand on its feet," Pezeshkian told the official site of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an interview. "Our dear military forces are doing their jobs with strength, and now, in terms of equipment and manpower, despite all the problems we have, they are stronger than when they [Israel and the US] attacked," he said.

CHINA'S MAGLEV TRAIN SHATTERS RECORDS, HITS 700 KMPH IN JUST 2 SECONDS

Diary Times Desk : China has achieved a major milestone in high-speed transportation research by setting a new world record in superconducting magnetic levitation (maglev) technology. Scientists at the National University of Defense Technology (NUDT) successfully accelerated a 1.1-ton experimental maglev vehicle to a speed of 700 km/h in just two seconds, marking the fastest acceleration and peak speed ever recorded for a superconducting maglev system.

The landmark test was conducted on a 400-meter experimental track and demonstrated not only ultra-rapid acceleration but also precise and safe braking. According to NUDT researchers, the vehicle was smoothly brought to a stop after reaching its maximum speed, underscoring the system's control and reliability at extreme performance levels.

'UNITED STATES IS REAL UNITED NATIONS': TRUMP ON THAILAND-CAMBODIA CEASEFIRE

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump on Sunday congratulated the leaders of Thailand and Cambodia on a ceasefire agreed the previous day after weeks of border clashes that have killed dozens.

"I want to congratulate both great leaders on their brilliance in coming to this rapid and very fair conclusion," said Trump, who has claimed credit for a previous truce that was broken earlier this month when the border conflict reignited. In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump called the eventual outcome "FAST & DECISIVE, as all of these situations should be!" He added that Washington, which has been involved in mediation efforts along with China and Malaysia, was "proud to help." Ahead of talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky later on Sunday, Trump lauded his self-proclaimed role in ending world conflicts, saying "perhaps the United States has become the REAL United Nations." "The United Nations must start getting active and involved in WORLD PEACE!" US Secretary of State Marco Rubio welcomed the Thailand-Cambodia ceasefire on Saturday, calling on both sides to "immediately honour this commitment." At least 47 people were killed and more than a million displaced in three weeks of fighting that spread to nearly every border province on both sides, according to official tallies. Announcing their agreement on Saturday, Thailand and Cambodia pledged to cease fire, freeze troop movements, and allow civilians living in border areas to return home as soon as possible.



AHEAD OF BANGLADESH POLLS, STUDENT-LED NCP ALLIES WITH JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI

Diary Times Desk : Bangladesh's largest Islamist party announced on Sunday a seat-sharing agreement with a political outfit formed by students who spearheaded last year's uprising, some of whose members oppose the alliance.

Jamaat-e-Islami appears determined to gain a foothold in government after next year's general election, the first polls since the student-led revolt toppled Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024.

Islamist movements that were crushed under Hasina's 15-year autocratic rule have regrouped since her fall, and the Jamaat regards the February 12 vote as its biggest opportunity in decades.

On Sunday, the Jamaat said it had reached an agreement with the student-led National Citizen Party following marathon talks, during which some NCP members had warned against the move. Jamaat leader Shafiqur Rahman announced a separate agreement with the small Liberal Democratic Party.

"BLUNT AGGRESSION": SOMALI PRESIDENT SLAMS ISRAEL FOR RECOGNISING SOMALILAND

Diary Times Desk : Israel's recognition of the breakaway region of Somaliland "is (a) threat to the security and stability of the world and the region," Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud told an emergency parliamentary session Sunday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Friday announcement, making his country the first to recognise Somaliland, "is tantamount to a blunt aggression against the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and the unity of the people of the Somali Republic," Mohamud said. Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in 1991 and has for decades pushed for international recognition.

A self-proclaimed republic, it enjoys a strategic position on the Gulf of Aden and has its own money, passports and army. But it has been diplomatically isolated since its unilateral declaration of independence. Somalia's government and the African Union reacted angrily on Friday after Israel's announcement. Mogadishu denounced a "deliberate attack" on its sovereignty, while Egypt, Turkey, the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council and the Saudi-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation all condemned the decision.

RISK-AVERSE GROWTH TAKES CENTRE STAGE ACROSS INDIA'S BFSI SECTOR: REPORT

Diary Times Desk : India's banking and financial services sector is entering a phase of steady but selective growth, with lenders increasingly prioritising asset quality, profitability and risk calibration over aggressive expansion, according to discussions at Antique Stock Broking's 3rd Annual BFSI Conference 2025 this month.

Banks indicated that credit demand remains stable but skewed toward secured retail products such as home loans, MSME lending, gold loans and loans against property, while corporate and unsecured retail segments are yet to see a meaningful revival.

Faster turnaround times driven by digitised origination and improved underwriting are supporting growth. Credit card issuers noted healthy spending growth, but loan growth is moderating due to lower revolver rates and a sharp slowdown in new card issuance, which has fallen by nearly 50-60 per cent. On asset quality, banks highlighted that delinquencies have stabilised, aided by tighter underwriting, cohort-based risk recalibration and better collections.

JEFFERIES SHIFTS WEIGHTAGE FROM CHINA AND INDONESIA TO INDIA AND TAIWAN

Diary Times Desk : Global investment bank Jefferies has increased its allocation to India and Taiwan in its Asia Pacific ex-Japan relative-return portfolio, while trimming exposure to China and Indonesia, citing evolving macroeconomic conditions and relative growth prospects across the region.

In its latest strategy note, Jefferies said it has raised the weightings of India and Taiwan by one percentage point each, funded through a reduction in allocations to China and Indonesia.

It says, "The weightings in India and Taiwan in the Asia Pacific ex-Japan relative-return portfolio will be increased by one percentage point each by reducing the weightings in China and Indonesia." According to Jefferies' Asia Pacific ex-Japan asset allocation, India's recommended weighting has been increased to 17 per cent, while Taiwan's allocation.

LOCKHEED MARTIN PITCHES C-130JS AS 'BEST' CHOICE FOR IAF'S TACTICAL AIRLIFT REQUIREMENT, PLANS PRODUCTION HUB IN INDIA

Diary Times Desk : As India prepares to procure up to 80 military transport planes, US aerospace major Lockheed Martin has pitched its C-130J Super Hercules as the best choice and said the aircraft will provide it a "stronger" heft for tactical airlift among the Quad nations. If Lockheed Martin gets the opportunity, then it will set up a mega hub in India to produce the "iconic" aircraft, and it will be the first such global facility outside of the US, top officials of the company told PTI. To date, Lockheed Martin has delivered more than 560 aircraft from the C-130J Super Hercules family, which have accumulated more than three million flight hours.

The leading tactical airlift has been serving 28 operators in 23 nations. The Indian Air Force (IAF) currently operates 12 C-130Js. Alongside the standard transport variant, Lockheed Martin offers multiple specialised configurations of the C-130J which enable the aircraft to perform intelligence, electronic warfare, and special forces support, search and rescue and command roles. Besides India, the three other Quad member nations — the US, Australia and Japan — have been operating C-130Js.



"WHEN SMARTPHONES AND LOW-COST DATA REACHED INDIANS, IT RELEASED ENORMOUS SURGE OF ECONOMIC ENERGY AT GRASSROOTS": GAUTAM ADANI

Diary Times Desk : Focusing on India's experience after Industrial Revolution, Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani on Sunday said that fears that mobile phones and digital technology would destroy jobs proved unfounded. Speaking at the inauguration of Vidya Pratishthan's Sharad Pawar Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (CoE-AI) in Baramati, Adani noted that affordable smartphones and low-cost data empowered ordinary citizens and unlocked economic activity at the grassroots level. He highlighted that between 1991 and 2024, India added over 230 million non-farm jobs, most of them created after the expansion of digital infrastructure. According to Adani, each industrial revolution has ultimately generated far more employment than it displaced by unlocking new business models and industries that were previously unimaginable. "Looking back, each industrial revolution created far more jobs than it displaced, by unlocking entirely new industries and business models that were previously not imagined. Bharat's own experience offers clear evidence. The mobile revolution, much as everyone had feared, did not destroy jobs. Instead, it multiplied them at massive scale.



ADANI PLANS RS 1.8 LAKH-CRORE DEFENCE SPEND TO BOOST INDIGENOUS MILITARY CAPABILITIES

Diary Times Desk : Adani Group plans to invest Rs 1.8 lakh crore next year in defence manufacturing, with a focus on strengthening capabilities in unmanned and autonomous systems as well as advanced guided weapons as it looks to play a stealth anchor role in India's future warfare capabilities, sources said.

Adani Defence & Aerospace in 2025 transitioned from extended planning cycles to rapid deployment with some of its military hardware being used in Operation Sindoor. Next year, it will invest in unmanned and autonomous systems, advanced guided weapons, sensors and electronics, AI-enabled multi-domain operations, and scaled-up maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) and training infrastructure, company sources said.

Autonomous systems across air, sea and land domains are unmanned platforms that use sensors, software and secure networks to operate with minimal human intervention, expanding military reach while reducing risk to personnel. In the air, they include UAVs that conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, communications relay and precision-support missions with long endurance. At sea, unmanned surface and underwater vehicles perform tasks such as maritime surveillance.



HOUSING SALES DIP BUT
TICKET SIZES RISE IN 2025,
SAYS ANAROCK

Diary Times Desk : Hardening property prices, layoffs in the IT sector, geopolitical tensions and other uncertainties dented India's residential growth momentum in 2025. ANAROCK Research data indicated that housing sales in the top 7 cities witnessed a 14 per cent decline in 2025, with approximately 395,625 units sold in the year against 459,645 units in 2024.

However, the overall sales value of housing units saw a 6 per cent yearly jump - from approximately Rs 5.68 lakh crore in 2024 to over Rs 6 lakh crore in 2025. Greater Mumbai witnessed the highest sales of approximately 1,27,875 units, registering an 18 per cent yearly decline. Pune followed with approximately 65,135 units sold, declining by 20 per cent year-on-year. The two western markets together led residential sales in 2025, comprising a 49 per cent overall share. New launches in the top 7 cities saw a 2 per cent annual increase - from approximately 412,520 units in 2024 to approximately 419,170 units in 2025.

RTS CORRIDORS POISED TO
DRIVE URBAN MOBILITY, REAL
ESTATE INVESTMENT: KNIGHT
FRANK REPORT

Diary Times Desk : India's Regional Rapid Transit System (RTS) is emerging as a critical driver of urban mobility transformation and corridor-led real estate growth, according to a new report by Knight Frank India.

Titled "Regional Rapid Transit System: Testing the Commuters' Pulse," the study highlights strong commuter satisfaction, rising investor confidence, and growing willingness among homebuyers to consider properties along RTS corridors. The report reveals that nearly 66 per cent of respondents surveyed are keen to purchase property in areas served by the RTS, underscoring the system's potential to reshape residential and commercial demand patterns. Around 80 per cent of existing RTS users associate improved connectivity with enhanced economic opportunities in their regions, reflecting the broader impact of high-speed regional transit on employment access and productivity. According to Knight Frank, visible infrastructure development.

OFFICE LEADS PRIVATE EQUITY INFLOWS IN 2025; OVERALL REAL ESTATE
INVESTMENT AT USD 3.5 BILLION: KNIGHT FRANK INDIA

Diary Times Desk : Private equity (PE) investments in Indian real estate moderated in 2025, declining 29 per cent year-on-year, but office assets continued to anchor investor interest, according to Knight Frank India.

Office real estate attracted more than USD 2 billion in PE investments during the year, accounting for 58 per cent of total inflows, even as overall real estate investments stood at USD 3.5 billion. In its latest report, 'Trends in Private Equity Investments in India: H2 2025,' Knight Frank India noted that office investment volumes remained broadly in line with the three-year average, underscoring continued investor conviction, despite a broader global reassessment of risk, returns and execution

Mumbai-based Knight Frank India said private equity investors remained cautious in 2025 as the market underwent a "sharp recalibration across three interconnected dimensions - the effective cost of capital, exit visibility, and valuation alignment." While macroeconomic conditions such as GDP growth, interest rates and inflation improved, these factors "failed to realign quickly enough to support sustained capital deployment," the report said. Residential real estate emerged as the second-largest recipient of PE investments, accounting for 17 per cent of total inflows. However, Knight Frank observed a shift in the nature of capital deployment, with investors increasingly favouring "credit-led instruments over pure equity exposure." Warehousing was the third-largest segment, drawing 15 per cent of PE investments in 2025, supported by robust occupier demand driven by e-commerce expansion, supply-chain formalisation and manufacturing growth.



GAUTAM ADANI INSPIRES YOUNG INDIA TO LEAD THE AI AGE



Diary Times Desk : In a call to young India, Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani on Sunday urged the next generation of Indians to rise and lead the age of artificial intelligence (AI) as building indigenous AI models, strong compute capacity and resilient intelligence ecosystems is essential to country's economic security, cultural confidence and strategic freedom. Addressing students and researchers at the inauguration of Vidya Pratishthan's Sharad Pawar Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (CoE-AI) in Baramati, Maharashtra, Adani said India is entering a decisive phase in which technology, talent, and national purpose must move together.

This era of AI is demanding your capability. The capability to think independently. The capability to create with our own hands. The capability to give India a new direction," he urged. India's enduring strength, he noted, lies in its ability to align people, institutions and long-term vision. That same clarity must now guide how young Indians approach artificial intelligence, not as passive users, but as builders and leaders of capability. Acknowledging anxieties around AI, Gautam Adani reminded the audience that history offers reassurance. Every major technological shift, from the Industrial Revolution to India's digital transformation, has expanded human potential. Artificial intelligence (AI), he said, will take this further by placing intelligence and productivity directly in the hands of ordinary citizens, opening pathways for youth from every background to participate in growth. He cautioned that AI leadership cannot be outsourced, as in a world where intelligence increasingly shapes economic power and national influence, dependence on foreign algorithms carries risks. Data, decision-making and capability must remain anchored in national interest. Building indigenous AI models, strong compute capacity and resilient intelligence ecosystems, he stressed, is essential to India's economic security, cultural confidence and strategic freedom. Placing this vision in context, Gautam Adani pointed to the growing role of the Adani Group in the global AI ecosystem. The diversified conglomerate is investing significantly in data centres, digital infrastructure and clean energy that powers compute at scale, drawing sustained engagement from global technology leaders such as Google and Microsoft, as India emerges as a serious hub for AI-led growth.

'GREEN TO GOLD' INITIATIVE AIMS TO MAKE STATE GLOBAL HEMP LEADER

Diary Times Desk : As part of the mission to make Himachal Pradesh self-reliant by 2027, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has spearheaded the 'Green to Gold' initiative.

The economic experiment aims to transition the state from a narrative of illicit trade to one of global leadership in the bio-economy by legalising and regulating the cultivation of industrial hemp. In a press statement issued here today, he said, for decades, cannabis had grown wild across the valleys of Kullu, Mandi, and Chamba, often marred by associations with the illegal drug trade. Henceforth, it would widely be acclaimed for its medicinal properties for pain management and inflammation, besides its uses in textile and apparel, paper and packaging, cosmetics and personal care, and biofuel and energy industries among others, he added. "The state government has identified this natural resource as a versatile industrial asset capable of producing high-value goods ranging from eco-friendly textiles to advanced bio-plastics. With proper regulation and awareness, hemp can become a key driver of eco-friendly industrial development, especially in hill and rural economies like Himachal Pradesh," the CM said.

HP TO RECEIVE SNOW, RAIN FROM DEC 30

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh, which at present is going through a prolonged dry spell is expected to receive fresh snowfall and rainfall 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 low 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.

DOCTORS MUST SHED THEIR EGO AND RESUME DUTY: CM SUKHU

Diary Times Desk : The stalemate over the indefinite strike by resident doctors across the state seems to have been resolved only partially as doctors remained divided over the decision to resume work as a faction remained adamant on revocation of the termination of Dr Raghav Nirula, accused of assaulting a patient at Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC). Even as the Resident Doctors Association (RDA) of IGMC formally called off the strike following assurance by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, a section of the doctors refused to call off the strike. “We are feeling very unsafe and vulnerable but we must be assured in written that Dr Raghav’s termination be revoked and safety of doctors be ensured,” said resident doctors who continued their protest outside IGMC. However, the decision by RDA came only after some tough talking by CM Sukhu who categorically made it clear that channels for communication would open only once the doctors shed their ‘ego’ and called off the strike. RDA President Dr Sohil Sharma and General Secretary Dr Adarsh Sharma said following assurance by the CM of a detailed inquiry, the strike had been called off.



CENTRE'S RS 601-CR DISASTER RELIEF WILL SPEED UP REHAB, SAYS BJP

Diary Times Desk : The BJP today welcomed the release of Rs 601.92 crore by the Union Government for disaster relief in Himachal Pradesh, calling it a major boost for rehabilitation and reconstruction while simultaneously launching a sharp attack on the Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led state government over law and order, debt and governance.

State BJP president Dr Rajeev Bindal said the assistance reflects the Centre's unwavering support for Himachal in times of crisis. "Today is a day of satisfaction for Himachal Pradesh. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led central government has sent an additional Rs 601.92 crore to help our disaster-affected brothers and sisters. This will accelerate rehabilitation, reconstruction and development works," he said. Dr Bindal thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda stating, "Because of their continuous efforts, Himachal has received nearly Rs 5,800 crore so far as disaster assistance. This proves the Modi government has stood shoulder to shoulder with the state." However, he accused the Sukhu government of administrative collapse. Referring to recent incidents of violence, Bindal said, "Open gang wars, gunfire.

KANGRA VALLEY CARNIVAL 2025: BOLLYWOOD NIGHT DRAWS HUGE CROWD IN DHARAMSALA

Diary Times Desk : The fourth evening of the Kangra Valley Carnival 2025 came alive with a high-energy Bollywood Night in Dharamsala on December 27, drawing a large and enthusiastic audience.

Youth Services, Sports and Ayush Minister Yadvinder Goma, who attended as chief guest, said such festivals provide an important platform for local artistes while promoting tourism and creating employment opportunities for youth.

He added that the carnival effectively showcases Himachal Pradesh's folk traditions alongside modern art, strengthening the local economy and cultural identity.

The evening featured electrifying performances by singer Kumar Sahil. Other performances by Nidhi Rastogi, Tanura Dance Troupe, Nitish Rajput and Divya Bhatt added to the festive atmosphere.

Traditional folk dances, including Sirmaur Nati and Mandi Nati, highlighted the state's rich cultural heritage.

YOUR HOROSCOPE
29-12-2025

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.

Sagittarius

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

Capricorn

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

Aquarius

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

Pisces

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

FAKING GANGSTER ARZOO
BISHNOI, 24-YR-OLD
GRADUATE MAKES
EXTORTION CALL TO ABOHAR
JEWELLER

Diary Times Desk : A 24-year-old young man, who allegedly faked gangster Arzoo Bishnoi and threatened to kill a jeweller if the latter failed to pay Rs 50 lakh, was apprehended in the grain market area. The suspect, identified as Nikesh Kumar, got his leg fractured while scaling a wall where he was trapped by the cops. He has been admitted to the Civil Hospital.

Senior Superintendent of Police Gurmeet Singh told the media on Sunday afternoon that Shival Jewellers operator, Shivam Soni, received a call on his mobile phone on December 23, threatening to kill him and his family within five days if extortion money was not paid. Soni filed a complaint with the police, who immediately registered a case against an unknown person and launched an investigation. The SSP stated that, acting swiftly, a team led by SP Ashwant Singh traced the call and apprehended the accused, Nikesh Kumar, a resident of Chuhrwala Dhanna, on Saturday.

CRASH IN POTATO PRICES
HITS FARMERS; BKU URGES
GOVT TO CUT LOSSES

Diary Times Desk : The BKU (Charuni) has requested the state government to protect potato farmers from losses as they have not been able to get remunerative prices for their produce. The union has threatened to launch an agitation if steps were not taken in time. After "The Tribune" highlighted the plight of potato farmers, the union sent a letter to CM Nayab Singh Saini, in which BKU (Charuni) chief Gurnam Singh stated that white-skin potato had been fetching poor prices in the market, causing losses to the farmers.

"A crash in the potato prices has been observed in the markets. Farmers, especially those who had grown white-skin potato, are getting Rs 180-480 a quintal, which is far less than the cost of production. The red-skin potato has been fetching Rs 500-775 a quintal. The red-skin and diamond varieties are special varieties, just like basmati variety in paddy crop. They fetch higher prices," said Gurnam Singh. Under the Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana (BBY), the government compensated the farmers in case the produce was sold.

FOG HORROR ON LUDHIANA HIGHWAY: MULTIPLE VEHICLES CRASH, LEAVING 1
DEAD, 5 INJURED

Diary Times Desk : One person was killed and five others were injured in a pile-up of vehicles that occurred on the highway at Ajnada village near Doraha in Ludhiana district due to poor visibility on Sunday morning. Losses could have been much higher had the LPG cylinders being transported in a truck that was part of the pile-up caught fire. Though details about the accident and identities of victims were yet to be ascertained, sources revealed that the driver of a car died when he was trying to remove a gas cylinder from underneath his vehicle. He was hit by another vehicle when he was standing near his car. The police, led by Sukhdev Singh, undertook a rescue operation with the support of Sadak Suraksha Force. Investigation revealed that the truck carrying gas cylinders had to apply brakes suddenly when the car in front of it slowed down. The mishap turned grave as a truck carrying cement bags collided with vehicles moving ahead and vehicles following it (truck) collided with one another. In another case, a Verna car collided with a private bus near Bharthala village on the Chandigarh-Samrala road. As the occupants of the car had fled before the arrival of police.



SUPREME COURT TAKES SUO MOTU COGNISANCE
OF ARAVALLI ROW, TO HEAR CASE ON MONDAY

Diary Times Desk : Amid widespread apprehensions about ecological degradation due to unregulated mining in the Aravalli Hills, the Supreme Court has taken suo motu cognisance of issues concerning its definition and has decided to urgently take up the matter on Monday.

The suo motu case titled 'In Re: Definition of Aravalli Hills and Ranges and Ancillary Issues' is listed for hearing before a Special Vacation Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice JK Maheshwari and Justice AG Masih on December 29. The top court had earlier approved an elevation-linked definition for classifying landforms as part of the Aravalli range — spanning across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat — for the purpose of mining regulation.

There have been public protests over the issue and environmental activists have expressed serious concerns over the revised definition of the Aravalli Hills, saying dilution of the definition could legitimise mining and construction activities in hitherto protected areas. They underlined Aravalli's ecological significance in preventing desertification and sustaining groundwater levels.

PANIPAT POLICE ARREST FOUR IN
CONNECTION WITH MURDER OF 40-
YEAR-OLD MAN

Diary Times Desk : The Panipat police have arrested four individuals allegedly involved in the murder of 40-year-old Vikram, a resident of Shastri Colony in Khatik Basti, on Friday night. The arrests were made following a brief exchange of fire on Mohali-Babail road on late Saturday evening. The police also recovered two country-made pistols and two live cartridges from the possession of the accused. According to DSP Satish Vats, after the murder, Superintendent of Police Bhupender Singh directed teams to solve the case. The CIA-1 team, led by Inspector Phool Kumar, received a tip that the accused were on Babail Road, Mohali, and conducted a raid on the spot. During the operation, the accused opened fire at the police team, who retaliated in self-defence. All four accused were apprehended, with two — Akshay and Deepak — sustaining bullet injuries in their legs and being admitted to Civil Hospital for treatment. The accused have been identified as Deepak and Sahil, residents of Shastri Colony, and Akshay and Suraj, residents of Khatik Basti. During the investigation, it was found that Akshay, Deepak and Sahil.

10 INDIANS CONFIRMED DEAD AFTER JOINING RUSSIAN ARMY, 4 STILL MISSING,
SAYS MAN SEARCHING FOR BROTHER



Diary Times Desk : Ten Indian youths who had gone abroad to earn a livelihood and later joined the Russian army have been confirmed dead. Among them, three were from Punjab, and the other seven were from Uttar Pradesh and Jammu. To search for these youths, Jagdeep Singh had gone to Russia and other places, but could not find any trace of them. Returning to India, Jagdeep presented all the documents to Rajya Sabha member Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal's office, which confirmed the deaths of these young men as per the Russian army. The parents of these deceased youths had been waiting for their children to return safely.

According to Jagdeep, the 10 Indians confirmed dead include Tejpal Singh from Amritsar, Arvind Kumar from Lucknow, Dharendra Kumar from UP, Vinod Yadav, Yogendra Yadav, and five others. The four missing Indians are Deepak, Yogeshwar Prashad, Azharuddin Khan, and Ram Chandra. He revealed that he first met Sant Seechewal on June 29, 2024, when he submitted a petition for the safe return of his brother Mandeep and other Indian youths trapped in Russia. Following this, Sant Seechewal met the Foreign Minister and wrote a letter requesting their safe return. Jagdeep mentioned that Sant Seechewal has been helping the affected families.

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.



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.

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

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

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

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

It's probably just the beginning.

The evolution of drones

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

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

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



Australia's About To Find Out

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

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



Hilary Whiteman

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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INFA

A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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

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



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

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.



BLUE GEMS BEYOND THE SNOW: A COLLECTING GUIDE TO KASHMIR SAPPHIRES

Diary Times Desk : The Zaskar Range is an austere beautiful region of peaks, rivers and gorges in the northwestern Himalayas, so remote it has been called the land ‘beyond the snows’. In 1881, a major landslide in the Zaskar mountains of Kashmir unexpectedly exposed a deposit of sapphires, bringing these buried rarities to light for the first time.

The Maharaja who ruled Kashmir at the time swiftly secured exclusive mining rights to this sapphire deposit. Located on a high plateau with a harsh climate, the Kashmir sapphire mines were only accessible for about three months each summer. From 1882 and 1887, miners worked day and night, unearthing sapphires of up to 3 x 5 inches in size. This period later became known as the ‘Golden Age’ of the Kashmir sapphire mines. After 1888, the ‘Old Mine’ was largely depleted, and the miners moved down to the valley floor.

The sapphires there were inferior in quality, however, and since 1927, nothing of note has been found at all, adding rarity to the beauty of these Kashmir sapphires, and lending them an almost mythical aura.

Top-quality Kashmir sapphires possess a saturated, deep and luscious colour that appears luminous in any light, akin to the ‘cornflower blue’ of a peacock’s neck. This unique hue, naturally blended with a velvety soft glow, constitutes a typical characteristic of sapphires from this origin. The ‘velvet’ texture of Kashmir sapphires is due to the scattering of light caused by parallel microscopic silk inclusions within the stone, a key feature distinguishing them from sapphires of other origins. The rarity of Kashmir sapphires stems largely from their brief primary deposit mining history. The period from the deposit’s discovery until 1887 was the ‘Golden Years’, yielding the finest and largest sapphires. However, the rich layers of the vein were quickly exhausted, and coupled with increasing mining difficulties, production plummeted. After the legendary ‘Old Mine’ was depleted, although sporadic mining occurred later, the quality was incomparable to the early finds. Official records show the mines officially closed in 1927. This means that all top-tier Kashmir sapphires with clear provenance on the market today originate from the ‘Old Mine’ over a century ago. For many gem enthusiasts, Kashmir sapphires are legendary stones not easily encountered in the market. One typically has the chance to see them only at major international auctions.



GIFTED BY EMPEROR NICHOLAS II TO THE DOWAGER EMPRESS MARIA FEODOROVNA ON EASTER DAY, 1913: THE WINTER EGG

Diary Times Desk :

The glittering fingers of frost on the glassy surface of the egg are beautiful, and so very realistic that you almost expect it to be cold to the touch. The egg rests on what appears to be shard of ice. It is almost formless, as if it had just been plucked out of the frozen River Neva, but somehow it gently and securely cradles the egg. Little silvered rivulets run down this ice-stalagmite, as if a thaw were on its way. Beneath the frosted shapes that occlude the transparent shell, a hint of something white is visible. The egg opens like a locket to reveal its secret: a hanging basket filled with wood anemones. The first forest flowers to bloom when the snows recede, they are confirmation that the long, cold night of the Russian winter is over, and springtime is near. This is the Winter Egg, commissioned by Emperor Nicholas II from the firm of Fabergé, and presented to his mother, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, on Easter Day, 1913. The gift of a Fabergé egg was a Romanov family tradition, inaugurated by Emperor Alexander III. He presented one to his wife — the same Maria Feodorovna — every year from 1885 on. Nicholas continued the custom after he came to the throne, in 1894 — and extended it by giving an egg to his wife, Empress Alexandra, as well as to his widowed mother.

For Fabergé, the imperial Easter eggs were a hugely prestigious commission, but also an annual headache. Work on next year’s eggs began as soon as this year’s were delivered. Emperor Nicholas’s desire for two eggs naturally doubled the creative pressure on Carl Fabergé and his teams of jewellers, who now had to come up with a brace of original ideas that were both different from each other and from every egg that had gone before. The royal client was not consulted at any time, as he too liked to be surprised. Nicholas never knew what he was paying for until the eggs were brought to him in Holy Week. So the pressure on Fabergé was enormous. What if the gifts were not finished on time? What if the emperor didn’t like what he saw? ‘The days before delivery were anxious,’ wrote Franz Birbaum, Fabergé’s chief designer. ‘Everyone worried that something might happen to these objects at the last moment.’The Winter Egg of 1913 must have been an especially stressful undertaking, since it is so astonishingly delicate. The design is the work of a young woman named Alma Pihl. She had no training as a silversmith, but she was a fine artist, and she came from a family of jewellers from Finland.



OFFICIAL: BARCELONA DOMINATE LA LIGA CATEGORIES IN GLOBE SOCCER AWARDS



Diary Times Desk : FC Barcelona have swept the board at the prestigious Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai, receiving resounding validation for their spectacular 2024/25 campaign. In a ceremony attended by the elite of world football, the Blaugrana were the undisputed protagonists of the night, taking home the top prizes in the dedicated La Liga categories. The jury and fans recognised Barcelona's domestic supremacy by crowning them the Best Club in La Liga.

This serves as a testament to the team's consistency and dominance throughout the year, where they have re-established themselves as the team to beat in Spain.

The architect of this success, Hansi Flick, was rightfully named the Best Coach in La Liga. Since taking over, the German tactician has transformed the squad into a high-pressing machine, blending tactical discipline with the raw talent of La Masia.

BARCELONA JOINED BY PREMIER LEAGUE CLUBS IN THE RACE TO SIGN FORMER DEFENDER – REPORT

Diary Times Desk : It is no secret that Barcelona are looking for defensive reinforcements in the market as the club look to replace the injured Andreas Christensen. Although there is no shortage of options in the market, the club's economic conditions mean they may only be able to sign players on loan.

One of the players Barça are keeping an eye on is former defender Joao Cancelo, who wants to return to Europe to prepare himself for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. After a loan spell at Barcelona, Cancelo joined Al Hilal in the summer of 2024. But his time in the Middle East hasn't gone smoothly and the player is currently out of coach Simone Inzaghi's plans for next year, reports Diario SPORT.

Cancelo, for his part, is unhappy in Saudi Arabia and wants to return to Europe, in order to get ready for the World Cup. Barcelona are among the clubs interested in his services, although the Portuguese international is not currently at the top of the club's wishlist. A right-back by trade, Cancelo was an asset under Xavi Hernandez due to his experience and versatility. The Barcelona defence could use some of his qualities heading into the second half of the season.

SURVEY REVEALS BARCELONA SOCIOS WOULD LIKE TO SELL THESE TWO STAR PLAYERS NEXT SUMMER

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona are gearing up for an important 2026. Although the club are not expected to make too many moves in the January transfer window, they could be in for a busy summer.

However, with the Financial Fair Play regulations still in place, Barcelona will once again have to rely on player sales in order to bring in new stars.

That is why a few Barcelona stars could be tipped to leave the club in the summer, as part of the club's attempt to raise money. Keeping that in mind, Mundo Deportivo has recently conducted a survey involving Barcelona socios, asking them about players they would like to sell next summer. The results are slightly varied, but it appears Barcelona socios have a clear preference for sacrificing high-value assets. Topping the list is Frenkie de Jong. A significant 37.33% of the surveyed members (112 votes) identified the Dutch midfielder as the most transferable player in the squad. Despite his importance to the team structure, his high salary and consistent market interest likely make him the primary candidate for a lucrative exit in the eyes of the club members and fans.

MANCHESTER CITY'S DEMAND EFFECTIVELY KILLS BARCELONA'S HOPES OF SIGNING DUTCH DEFENDER

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona's already complicated search for defensive reinforcements in January appears to have suffered another setback, with a report from SPORT pointing towards what is effectively the end of the road in their pursuit of Nathan Ake. Ake had emerged as a serious option for Barcelona as they explored short-term solutions to reinforce the back line.

The Dutch international is open to leaving Manchester City, and the idea of playing for Barça was particularly appealing to him. From a sporting perspective, his profile ticked many boxes. Ake is left-footed, comfortable as a centre-back, and capable of filling in at left-back when required, an attribute that adds tactical flexibility.

As such, he has never fully nailed down a starting role under Pep Guardiola, even though his performances with the Netherlands show that he can still operate at a high international level. For Barcelona, this combination of experience and versatility made him an attractive name in a market with limited options.



JOAN LAPORTA SPEAKS ON LA MASIA VS. BIG SIGNINGS, MISSING CLUB WORLD CUP, AND LA LIGA HOPES

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona President Joan Laporta is currently in Dubai, attending the prestigious Globe Soccer Awards.

Amidst the glitz and glamour of the event, where the Blaugrana are well-represented, the club chief took time to address the media (h/t FCB World) regarding the most pressing topics surrounding the Catalan giants.

One of the most frequent questions asked by Barcelona fans revolves around the club's transfer strategy.

When asked if the club will continue to rely solely on the academy or look for heavy-calibre names in the future, Laporta was firm in his defence of the club's identity but left the door open for transfers.

"We are working on producing players from La Masia, and we have many talents capable of reaching the first team, and we are proud of the philosophy we work according to," Laporta began. "In fact, there are players from La Masia who reach the first team, and at the same time, we also want to sign other players and integrate them together, and we are proud of this work."

GIRONA MAKING MAJOR PUSH TO SIGN OUT-OF-FAVOUR BARCELONA CAPTAIN

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona's goalkeeping situation has taken another unexpected turn, with a recent report from SPORT revealing that Girona are actively pushing to sign Marc-Andre ter Stegen during the January transfer window.

In recent weeks, much of the speculation around Ter Stegen's future had centred on Aston Villa.

The Premier League side were repeatedly linked with a move for the German goalkeeper, especially given the uncertainty surrounding his role at Barcelona.

However, the reality on the ground is very different, as Aston Villa are not currently in the market for a new goalkeeper.

The Premier League club is satisfied with their existing setup, led by Emiliano Martinez and supported by Marco Bizot. From Villa's perspective, that position is well covered. Despite the strong institutional relationship between Barcelona and Aston Villa, it has been confirmed that there are no negotiations underway involving Ter Stegen heading to England. That door, at least for now, is firmly closed.