

NEWS IN BRIEF

FORMER
CHHATTISGARH CM
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SON CHAITANYA WALKS
OUT OF PRISON AFTER
GETTING BAIL

Diary Times Desk : A day after the Chhattisgarh High Court granted him bail in two cases linked to the alleged liquor scam, Chaitanya Baghel, son of senior Congress leader and former chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, was released from Raipur Central Jail on Saturday. Bhupesh Baghel noted that it was Chaitanya's birthday when he was first arrested by the Enforcement

Directorate on July 18, 2025, "as part of a conspiracy", and the release coincided with the birthday of Chaitanya's son. The high court in Bilaspur on Friday allowed his bail pleas in the cases registered by ED and Chhattisgarh Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB)/Economic Offences Wing (EOW).

Bhupesh Baghel, accompanied by a large number of Congress supporters, received Chaitanya outside the jail. The supporters shouted slogans, waved party flags and beat drums. Chaitanya touched his father's feet and embraced him before leaving in an SUV, waving to supporters from the rooftop window while holding a Congress flag.

**SIRAJ MAKES ODI
COMEBACK FOR
NEW ZEALAND
SERIES, IYER'S
PARTICIPATION
SUBJECT TO
FITNESS**

Diary Times Desk : Senior India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj on Saturday made a comeback to the ODI side for the three-match home series against New Zealand while batter Shreyas Iyer was included subject to fitness clearance.

Siraj, who was overlooked for the home series against South Africa, is back in the ODI setup. His new ball partner Jasprit Bumrah was expected to rest from the series with the focus on the shortest format ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning next month.

Iyer, who was hospitalised during the ODI series in Australia in November for spleen laceration, will need to prove his match fitness in a Vijay Hazare Trophy game on January 6 to get fitness clearance from the Centre of Excellence (COE). He returns to the squad as vice-captain.

PM MODI NEWS

SACRED RELICS OF BUDDHA NOT MERELY ARTEFACTS, BUT PART OF INDIA'S REVERED HERITAGE: PM MODI



Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated an exposition of sacred ancient gems and bone fragments linked to the Buddha, asserting that they were not mere artefacts but part of India's revered heritage.

The prime minister said the sacred Piprahwa Relics travelled to different countries with significant Buddhist populations, including Vietnam, Thailand and Russia, where waves of faith and devotion arose, and people turned up in huge numbers to pay homage.

"This shared heritage of Lord Buddha is proof that India is not connected merely through politics, diplomacy, and economy, but through deeper bonds of emotions, faith and spirituality," he said.

PM Modi was speaking at a function to inaugurate the exhibition "The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One" at Qila Rai Pithora Cultural Complex in south Delhi.

He recalled that the sacred relics were returning to India after more than 125 years at the intervention of the government and the Godrej Group, which together stopped them from being auctioned off in Hong Kong last May. "For India, the sacred relics of Bhagwan Buddha are not merely artefacts; they are a part of our revered heritage and an inseparable part of our civilisation," the prime minister said at the event here in the presence of Buddhist scholars, diplomats and other guests.

ABHISHEK BANERJEE DUBS CEC 'MAGICIAN', 'VANISH KUMAR', LIKENS BJP MPS TO 'SNAKES' IN PRE-POLL SALVO

Diary Times Desk : Sharpening TMC's pre-poll attack on the EC and BJP, party leader Abhishek Banerjee on Saturday derided CEC Gyanesh Kumar as a "magician" for "arbitrary" voter deletions during the SIR in West Bengal, and compared BJP MPs to "snakes" that would inevitably bite its own voters.

Renaming the CEC as "Vanish Kumar", Banerjee alleged a deliberate conspiracy to erase legitimate voters from the electoral rolls, claiming the revision process was carried out without transparency or accountability.

Addressing a rally in north Bengal's Alipurduar, a district where the BJP has consolidated its electoral footprint since 2019, Banerjee was speaking at the second of his 26 public meetings under the TMC's 19-day statewide campaign Abar Jitbe Bangla (Bengal will win again).

Taking direct aim at the poll panel, Banerjee alleged that eligible voters were being struck off electoral rolls without transparency. "Do you know Gyanesh Kumar? He is a magician. He can make living people disappear from voter lists and make the dead walk. That is why he is now 'Vanish Kumar,'" Banerjee said. He claimed TMC leaders had approached the Election Commission in Delhi seeking disclosure of SIR data and procedures.



MADHYA PRADESH WATER CONTAMINATION TRAGEDY: CLASH ERUPTS BETWEEN CONGRESS, BJP WORKERS; 45 DETAINED



Diary Times Desk : Around 45 Madhya Pradesh Congress workers were detained on Saturday as a "precautionary measure" after a clash with BJP workers when a fact-finding committee of the opposition party was at Indore's Bhagirathpura area, where water contamination has claimed six lives.

The Congress committee under former state minister Sajjan Singh Verma, which includes MLAs Mahesh Parmar and Pratap Grewal, was on its way to meet affected families when BJP workers gathered at the spot carrying black flags and shouted slogans, eyewitnesses said.

Congress workers too replied with slogans denouncing the ruling party, following which the two sides clashed, scuffled with each other and threw slippers, they added.

A police team that arrived at the spot escorted the Congress' fact-finding committee members and workers out of the area and took them to the central jail, they said. "To maintain law and order in Bhagirathpura, 45 people, including 10 women, were detained as a precautionary measure. They were later released on bail," Deputy Commissioner of Police Rajesh Vyas told PTI.

DELHI RIOTS: SUPREME COURT TO PRONOUNCE VERDICT ON BAIL PLEAS OF UMAR, SHARJEEL, OTHERS ON JANUARY 5



Diary Times Desk : The Supreme Court will pronounce its verdict on the bail pleas of activists Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam and five other accused in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case on Monday.

A Bench of Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice NV Anjaria, which reserved its verdict on separate petitions filed by the seven accused, will pronounce its verdict on January 5 when the top court reopens after the winter break.

The top court had reserved its verdict after hearing arguments from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor General SV Raju for the Delhi Police and senior advocates Kapil Sibal, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Siddhartha Dave, Salman Khurshid, Sidharth Luthra and others representing the accused. Booked under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1967, the seven accused — Khalid, Imam, Gulfisha Fatima, Meera Haider, Shifa Ur Rehman, Md. Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmed — have been in jail for more than five years.

Newly sworn in first Muslim Mayor of New York Zohran Mamdani recently wrote a letter of support to Umar Khalid. A group of US lawmakers has also written a letter to Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra, urging a "fair and timely" trial for Khalid in "accordance with international law".

HIMACHAL PRADESH

COLLEGE TEACHER SUSPENDED OVER STUDENT'S DEATH: DHARAMSALA COLLEGE PROFESSOR ACCUSED OF RAGGING



Diary Times Desk : The Education Department has suspended a college teacher named in the FIR related to the death of Pallav, a 19-year-old Dalit student of Dharamsala college. Rakesh Kanwar, Secretary of Education, has ordered the suspension of Assistant Professor Ashok Kumar (Geography), pending the outcome of a departmental inquiry.

During the period of his suspension, the headquarters of the college teacher shall be the Directorate of Higher Education in the state capital. He has also been directed not to leave the headquarters without prior permission from the Secretary of Education.

The suspension has been ordered following the naming of the teacher in the FIR by the father of the deceased student at Dharamsala. "As per media reports, the prima facie involvement of Ashok Kumar cannot be ruled out. In order to ascertain the facts, disciplinary proceedings against him are contemplated," the suspension order states. "A four-member committee headed by Additional Director Higher Education Harish Kumar, with principals of Dhaliara, Baijnath and Naura government colleges as its members, has been constituted to conduct a fact-finding/preliminary enquiry.

14 MAOISTS, INCLUDING 2 WANTED ULTRAS, KILLED IN SEPARATE ENCOUNTERS IN CHHATTISGARH



Diary Times Desk : Security forces killed 14 Naxalites, including wanted ultras Mangtu (DVCM) and Hunga Madkam, in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh's Sukma and Bijapur districts in the Bastar region on Saturday, officials said.

While 12 Naxalites, including Mangtu (DVCM), were neutralised by the security forces during an exchange of fire in Sukma, the bodies of two Maoist cadres, including Hunga Madkam, were found in the forests of Gaganpalli village in Basuguda, Bijapur, senior officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs said.

In Bijapur, the forces recovered one SLR rifle and one 12-bore rifle, along with the bodies of two Naxalites, they said. A senior police official said the encounter broke out in the southern region of Sukma district when the team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation. In Bijapur, the gunfight broke out in a forest in the southern region of the district when a team of the District Reserve Guard, a unit of the state police, was out on a similar operation around 5 am, another official said.

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Diary Times Desk : The Supreme Court will pronounce its verdict on the bail pleas of activists Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam and others accused in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case on January 5. A Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria will pronounce the verdict on multiple pleas of the accused in the case. On December 10, the top court reserved its verdict on separate pleas of the accused after hearing arguments from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for Delhi Police, and senior advocates Kapil Sibal, Abhishek Singhvi, Siddhartha Dave, Salman Khurshid and Sidharth Luthra, appearing for the accused. Strongly opposing the bail pleas, the Delhi Police had said the February 2020 riots were not spontaneous, but an "orchestrated, pre-planned and well-designed" attack on India's sovereignty. Police had said that Sharjeel Imam's speeches can be attributed to other accused and can be used as evidence against them in the case. S V Raju had contended that all the participants are liable for each other's acts in a conspiracy. "Acts of one conspirator can be attributed to others. Sharjeel Imam's speeches can be attributed to Umar Khalid. Sharjeel Imam's case will be considered as evidence against the others.

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INDIAN FERTILITY EXPERTS ADVISE AGAINST ROUTINE USE OF NEW NON-INVASIVE EMBRYO GENETIC TEST

Diary Times Desk : As more couples in India turn to assisted reproduction to build families, leading fertility and embryology bodies have raised concerns over a test marketed as a non-invasive way to assess the genetic health of embryos. They cautioned that the technique should not be used for routine clinical practice due to high rates of misdiagnosis. The test in question is non-invasive preimplantation genetic testing (niPGT), also known as non-invasive chromosomal screening (NICS). In a first-of-its-kind, patient-focused initiative, the Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction (ISAR), the Indian Fertility Society (IFS), and the Academy of Clinical Embryologists (ACE) jointly evaluated niPGT to assess whether it is ready for clinical use. The exercise was led by scientist Dr Deepak Modi at the ICMR-National Institute for Research in Reproductive and Child Health (ICMR-NIRCH). After a comprehensive review of global scientific evidence, the expert panel concluded that niPGT is not yet suitable for routine clinical use in India and should not be used to decide which embryo to transfer.

HINDU BUSINESSMAN DIES THREE DAYS AFTER ATTACK IN BANGLADESH

Diary Times Desk : A Hindu businessman who was brutally attacked, hacked and set on fire three days ago died on Saturday in Bangladesh, according to media reports and a minority faith group leader.

This marks the fifth death of a member of the Hindu community since December, with radical groups allegedly attempting to intimidate religious minorities in the country, said Kajol Debnath, spokesperson of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council. The victim, Khokon Chandra Das (50), was assaulted near Keurbangha Bazar in Damudya, Shariatpur district — about 100 km south of Dhaka — on Wednesday night while returning home after closing his shop. "Das died this morning after battling for life for three days," Debnath confirmed. Das, who ran a medicine shop and a mobile banking business, was travelling in an autorickshaw when the attackers intercepted the vehicle. They allegedly beat him, hacked him with sharp weapons, poured petrol on him and set him on fire, media reports said. In a desperate attempt to save himself, Das jumped into a roadside pond as locals raised an alarm. The attackers fled, police said. He was rescued by locals, taken to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital and later referred to Dhaka due to the severity of his injuries.

ARMS TRAFFICKER WITH INTERSTATE LINKS HELD IN DELHI, TWO PISTOLS SEIZED

Diary Times Desk : Delhi Police have arrested an alleged supplier of illegal firearms from the Shastri Park area in northeast Delhi and recovered two sophisticated pistols along with six live cartridges from his possession, an official said on Saturday. The accused has been identified as Ankit (26), alias Munna, a resident of Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh. He is suspected to be part of an interstate arms trafficking racket, the official said. During interrogation, Ankit revealed that he entered the illegal arms trade after his release from jail and had been supplying firearms across the Delhi-NCR region. He also disclosed that he procured weapons from another supplier identified as Sonu, alias Kale, police added. According to police, Ankit is a habitual offender with six previous criminal cases registered against him, including cases related to murder, robbery, violations of the Arms Act, and offences under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Aditya Gautam said that on January 2, police received specific information about an Uttar Pradesh-based arms supplier who was expected to arrive near Shastri Park Metro Station. Acting on the tip-off, a police team laid a trap in the area. "The suspect reached the spot in an auto-rickshaw and was identified by a secret informer. He attempted to flee but was overpowered after a brief chase," the officer said.

TELANGANA ASSEMBLY ABOLISHES TWO-CHILD NORM FOR LOCAL BODY POLLS

Diary Times Desk : The Telangana Legislative Assembly on Saturday passed a bill to do away with the two-child norm that disqualifies individuals with more than two children from contesting local body elections. Panchayat Raj Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka, who moved the Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026, said the two-child norm was introduced in 1994 as a population control measure to overcome the challenges of food security, unemployment and poverty associated with the population explosion in the 1980s and 90s. However, the government reviewed population policy 30 years after the two-child rule. The fertility rate in rural areas in Telangana is 1.7 which is less than the replacement rate. If the fertility rate continued at 1.7, it would adversely affect the interests of Telangana's population, she said. The government felt that it is necessary to have the replacement rate at 2.1 in view of the long term future of coming generations.

RAJASTHAN GOVT TAKES ACTION AGAINST 6 PHARMA STORES FOR IRREGULARITIES IN RGHS



Diary Times Desk : The state health department has taken action against six pharma stores for alleged irregularities in the Rajasthan Government Health Scheme (RGHS) in the past week, officials said. The FIRs have been registered against four pharma stores, while two other stores have been suspended from the scheme. Additionally, 14 personnel have been suspended for their alleged involvement in the irregularities, they said. In a statement, Principal Secretary Gayatri Rathore said the government is following a zero-tolerance policy against misuse of the scheme. Department action and recovery have been initiated against 19 beneficiaries, while more personnel have been suspended in recent cases. Rajasthan State Health Assurance Agency CEO Harjeelal Atal said two pharma stores in Bhilwara wrongly claimed RGHS payments for medicines not procured by them, causing a loss of about Rs 27 lakh to the exchequer.

BJP LEADER LALPURA CONDEMNS BIJNOR GURDWARA VIOLENCE, NCM SEEKS PROBE REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Senior BJP leader Iqbal Singh Lalpura, a member of the party's parliamentary board and former chairman of National Commission for Minorities (NCM), has condemned the violence at a gurdwara in Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh. He has also written to NCM to take action against those involved in the incident. The incident occurred on Veer Bal Diwas, when a peaceful religious programme and lecture series were being organised at the gurdwara in Bijnor to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of the Sahibzadas. During the programme, anti-social and communal elements allegedly disrupted the event and launched an attack, creating panic and tension at the religious complex. As a result of the attack, a local resident, Ramnideep Singh, sustained serious injuries, including severe damage to his eye and other parts of his body. Lalpura claimed that NCM has taken cognisance of his complaint regarding the violent incident.

GANDHINAGAR TYPHOID SURGE: OVER 100 PERSONS HOSPITALISED, AMIT SHAH REVIEWS SITUATION

Diary Times Desk : Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi on Saturday reviewed the situation at Gandhinagar Civil Hospital after 104 patients, including children, were admitted for suspected typhoid. Typhoid cases have been increasing in the Civil Hospital in the last three days, with 104 patients admitted to the paediatric ward, officials said. Sanghavi said senior officials, including the deputy collector, have been asked to assess the situation at the hospital, while arrangements such as food and other facilities have been made for families of admitted patients. A team of 22 doctors has been formed to treat the patients, he said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah discussed the situation with the district collector over the phone three times and will take a review again in the evening, Sanghavi added. "At present, 104 suspected cases have been reported. The administration is continuously strengthening treatment and monitoring arrangements. Efforts are ongoing to provide better facilities.

FOREIGN OFFICE CRITICISES EAM JAISHANKAR FOR HIS REMARKS ABOUT PAKISTAN

Diary Times Desk : Pakistan on Saturday criticised External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for his remarks about the country, claiming that the comments were made to deflect attention from India's own "troubling record" of "promoting instability" in the region. Jaishankar on Friday said India has every right to defend its people when it comes to "bad neighbours" and asserted that a neighbouring country cannot ask New Delhi to share water if it continues to spread terrorism in the country. He, however, did not name any country. "Pakistan firmly rejects the irresponsible assertions made by the Indian External Affairs Minister," Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said in a statement to media queries. Once again, India "seeks to deflect attention from its own troubling record" as a neighbour that "contributes to regional instability", Andrabi alleged. He also said that the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) is an international agreement concluded in good faith and at considerable cost.

CONG TO LAUNCH NATIONWIDE 'MGNREGA BACHAO SANGRAM' FROM JAN 10-FEB 25 AGAINST G RAM G ACT

Diary Times Desk : The Congress on Saturday announced a nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' from January 10 to February 25 to demand the withdrawal of the VB G-RAM-G Act, and restoration of MGNREGA as a rights-based law, the right to work, and the authority of panchayats. Addressing a joint press conference, Congress general secretaries K C Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh said through the new VB G RAM G Act, the Centre has ensured complete centralisation as "employment will no longer be a right under the new Act", which would be challenged in court. On whether the states ruled by the INDIA bloc constituents would implement the new Act or oppose it, Venugopal said the Congress would hold consultations with all the alliance partners on the way forward. The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Bill, or VB-G RAM G, was passed with a voice vote amid protests in the Rajya Sabha on December 18, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it. On December 21, President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Bill, making it an Act, which seeks to replace the rural employment law.



TRUMP, TOP IRANIAN OFFICIALS EXCHANGE THREATS OVER PROTESTS ROILING IRAN



Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump and top Iranian officials exchanged duelling threats on Friday as widening protests swept across parts of the Islamic Republic, further escalating tensions between the countries after America bombed Iranian nuclear sites in June.

At least eight people have been killed so far in violence surrounding the demonstrations, which were sparked in part by the collapse of Iran's rial currency but have increasingly seen crowds chanting anti-government slogans. The protests, now in their sixth day, have become the biggest in Iran since 2022, when the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody triggered nationwide demonstrations.

However, the protests have yet to be as widespread and intense as those surrounding the death of Amini, who was detained over not wearing her hijab, or headscarf, to the liking of authorities. Trump post sparks quick Iranian response. Trump initially wrote on his Truth Social platform, warning Iran that if it "violently kills peaceful protesters," the United States "will come to their rescue."

"We are locked and loaded and ready to go," Trump wrote, without elaborating. Ali Larijani, a former parliament speaker who serves as the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, alleged that Israel and the US were stoking the demonstrations. He offered no evidence to support the allegation, which Iranian officials have repeatedly made during years of protests sweeping the country. "Trump should know that intervention by the US in the domestic problem corresponds to chaos."

BRITAIN NOT INVOLVED IN US STRIKES ON VENEZUELA: UK PM KEIR STARMER

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Britain was not involved in the United States' strikes on Venezuela on Saturday and that it was important to uphold international law, and that he wanted to speak to US President Donald Trump and find out exactly what had happened.

Trump said in a post on social media early on Saturday that US forces had captured Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro and removed him from the country while Venezuela's Vice President Delcy Rodriguez said she did not know Maduro's location or if he was still alive.

Asked if he condemned the US action like the leaders of Britain's left-leaning Liberal Democrat and Green parties, who both called it unlawful, Starmer said he first wanted to understand exactly what had happened. "It's obviously a fast-moving situation and we need to establish all the facts," he said in a statement to British broadcasters. "I want to speak to President Trump. I want to speak to allies. I can be absolutely clear that we were not involved ...

TRUMP FINALLY ENDS NICOLAS MADURO'S HEAVY-HANDED RULE IN VENEZUELA



Diary Times Desk : Nicolas Maduro ruled Venezuela with a heavy hand for more than 12 years, presiding over deep economic and social crises and resisting pressure from domestic opponents and foreign governments for political change. His rule abruptly ended on Saturday when President Donald Trump announced US forces had captured him and flown him out of the country. A 63-year-old socialist and the handpicked successor of the late Hugo Chavez, Maduro was long accused by critics both at home and abroad of being a dictator who jailed or persecuted political opponents and repeatedly staged sham elections. Maduro, a salsa aficionado with a flair for theatrics, often called opposition politicians "fascist demons" and took pride in resisting US pressure against him, even having his invocation to Trump of "yes peace, not war" remixed into an electronica song.

DEATH TOLL RISES TO AT LEAST 10 IN VIOLENCE AROUND IRAN PROTESTS

Diary Times Desk : Violence surrounding protests in Iran sparked by the Islamic Republic's ailing economy killed two other people, authorities said Saturday, raising the death toll in the demonstrations to at least 10 as they showed no signs of stopping. The new deaths follow US President Donald Trump warning Iran on Friday that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters," the United States "will come to their rescue". While it remains unclear how and if Trump will intervene, his comments sparked an immediate, angry response from officials within the theocracy threatening to target American troops in the Mideast. The weeklong protests, have become the biggest in Iran since 2022, when the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody triggered nationwide demonstrations. However, the protests have yet to be as widespread and intense as those surrounding the death of Amini, who was detained over not wearing her hijab, or headscarf, to the liking of authorities. The deaths overnight into Saturday involved a new level of violence.



HELICOPTER CRASHES IN ARIZONA MOUNTAINS, KILLING 4 PEOPLE ABOARD

Diary Times Desk : Four people were killed when a helicopter crashed on Friday, in the mountains in Arizona, officials said. The crash near Telegraph Canyon, about 64 miles (103 kilometres) east of Phoenix, took place around 11 am, the Pinal County Sheriff's Office said in a post on the social platform X. All four people on the helicopter were killed, including the 59-year-old pilot and two 21-year-old women and a 22-year-old woman, according to the sheriff's office. "Our prayers are with the victims and their families," the sheriff's office said. The Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating the crash. The flight had taken off from an airport in the nearby town of Queen Creek. Flights were temporarily restricted over the area due to safety reasons, according to the sheriff's office.

FOLLOWING BCCI DIKTAT, KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

RELEASE MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN AMID INDO-BANGLA TENSIONS

Diary Times Desk : Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman has been released by IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders after being instructed to do so by the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) amid heightening diplomatic tensions between the two neighbouring countries. KKR had acquired the services of the 30-year-old left-arm for Rs 9.20 crore from a base price of Rs 2 crore after an intense bidding war with Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals at the players' auction last month. The BCCI said KKR will be allowed to name a replacement player if required for the event scheduled to start on March 26. "The BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to release Mustafizur Rahman from its squad. They can ask for replacement, if needed. And upon request, BCCI will allow a replacement player," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI here on Saturday.

Asked why the BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to do so, he replied, "Because of recent developments all across." In a statement, the franchise said it has released the player as instructed by the BCCI. "Kolkata Knight Riders confirms that BCCI/IPL as the regulator of IPL has instructed it to release Mustafizur Rahman from the squad ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season. "The release has been carried out following due process and consultations, upon the instruction of the Board of Control of Cricket in India," KKR said in a statement.

SIX PEOPLE INJURED IN FATAL FIRE AT SWISS BAR REMAIN UNIDENTIFIED, IT'S AN UNBEARABLE WAIT

Diary Times Desk : Sixteen-year-old Arthur Brodard had gone to the Le Constellation bar with friends to celebrate the New Year. Nearly 48 hours after a devastating fire, his mother still clung to the hope that he might be among the six injured people who remained unidentified after one of Switzerland's worst tragedies.

Those half-dozen unidentified victims offered a glimmer of hope to families searching for loved ones after the fire at the Alpine ski resort of Crans-Montana, which killed 40 people and injured 119 others. Of the injured, 113 have been formally identified.

"I'm looking everywhere. The body of my son is somewhere," Laetitia Brodard of Lausanne told reporters. "I want to know where my child is and be by his side, whether that is in the intensive care unit or the morgue."

The severity of the burns has made it difficult to identify both the injured and the deceased, forcing families to provide DNA samples.

In several cases, wallets and identification documents were reduced to ash. An Instagram account has been flooded with photographs of those unaccounted for, as friends and relatives pleaded for information about their whereabouts. Officials in the Valais regional government acknowledged the prolonged anguish faced by families.



"UNACCEPTABLE VIOLATION OF SOVEREIGNTY," SAYS RUSSIA ON CAPTURE OF NICOLAS MADURO

Diary Times Desk : The Russian Federation on Saturday issued an additional statement on its response to the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife. The Russian side said if the reports were true, it was an unacceptable violation of Venezuela's sovereignty. In its statement the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation said, "We are extremely concerned by reports that the President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro and his spouse were forcibly taken out of the country during today's aggressive actions by the United States. We demand immediate clarification of these reports. If such actions did in fact take place, they represent an unacceptable violation of the sovereignty of an independent state."

NARROW ESCAPE FOR AROUND 50 PASSENGERS AS PLANE OVERSHOOTS RUNWAY IN NEPAL

Diary Times Desk : A Buddha Air aircraft overshot a runway at Nepal's Bhadrapur Airport while landing on Friday, officials said.

All aboard are safe and have been evacuated. The aircraft took off from Kathmandu carrying around 50 passengers.

It slipped off the ground while attempting to land at Bhadrapur airport at around 9 pm, according to Tribhuvan International Airport spokesperson Rinji Sherpa. The airplane overshot the runway by some 200 metres off the ground near a rivulet, suffering minor damage during the incident. All the passengers are safe and have been evacuated from the site, Sherpa told PTI over the phone.

"YOU DON'T GET TO AVOID JUSTICE FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING IN US BECAUSE YOU LIVE IN A PALACE...": JD VANCE ON MADURO'S CAPTURE

Diary Times Desk : After the US strikes into Venezuela and the capture of President Nicolas Maduro, US Vice President JD Vance on Saturday hailed the special operators who carried out the operation and defended the action saying that the Venezuelan president has multiple indictments in the United States for narcoterrorism.

In a series of posts on X, he said that throughout the process it was clear that drug trafficking must stop, and the stolen oil must be returned to the United States. "The president offered multiple off ramps, but was very clear throughout this process: the drug trafficking must stop, and the stolen oil must be returned to the United States. Maduro is the newest person to find out that President Trump means what he says. Kudos to our brave special operators who pulled off a truly impressive operation." To the people calling the American actions illegal, he added, "And PSA for everyone saying this was 'illegal': Maduro has multiple indictments in the United States for narcoterrorism. You don't get to avoid justice for drug trafficking in the United States because you live in a palace in Caracas."



SWISS BAR FIRE THAT KILLED 40 LIKELY CAUSED BY CHAMPAGNE SPARKLERS: OFFICIALS

Diary Times Desk : Sparklers attached to champagne bottles and held too close to the ceiling likely sparked the deadly fire at the "Le Constellation" bar in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, during a New Year's party, killing at least 40 people, CNN quoted officials as saying.

The blaze reportedly spread rapidly due to a flashover, and Swiss prosecutors have opened an investigation into possible criminal responsibility.

Earlier, at a press conference in Crans-Montana, Valais Cantonal Police Commander Frederic Gisler said authorities responded swiftly after a fire was reported at a bar in the area. According to Gisler, smoke was first seen coming from the bar in the centre of the Swiss ski resort at around 1:30 am. Moments later, a witness contacted the emergency call centre to report the incident. A red alert was immediately issued to mobilise firefighting services, he added. The first teams from the Crans-Montana intercommunal police and the gendarmerie reached the scene at 1:32 am, and were soon joined by additional emergency responders, CNN reported.

FBI SAYS IT DISRUPTED POTENTIAL NEW YEAR'S EVE ATTACK INSPIRED BY ISLAMIC STATE GROUP

Diary Times Desk : The FBI said on Friday that it had disrupted a plot to attack a North Carolina grocery store on New Year's Eve, arresting a man who, officials said, was inspired by the Islamic State group and had pledged loyalty to the extremist militants. Christian Sturdivant, 18, was charged with attempting to provide material support to a foreign terror organisation. Sturdivant was arrested by federal agents on Wednesday. He remained held following an appearance before US District Judge Susan Rodriguez on Friday morning, pending a hearing on January 7.

The lawyer representing Sturdivant in federal court on Friday didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. An FBI affidavit filed in the case said Sturdivant came under investigation last month following information that an account that officials say was later connected to Sturdivant had made social media posts supportive of IS. The affidavit says Sturdivant had been on the FBI's radar in January 2022, when he was a minor, after officials learned that he had been in contact with an IS member in Europe and had received instructions to dress in all black and commit attacks with a hammer.

"MADURO CHARGED WITH NARCO-TERRORISM CONSPIRACY," SAYS US ATTORNEY GENERAL PAMELA BONDI

Diary Times Desk : US Attorney General Pamela Bondi on Saturday announced that captured Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro has been charged with Narco-Terrorism and would face US justice. In a post on X she said, "Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, have been indicted in the Southern District of New York. Nicolas Maduro has been charged with Narco-Terrorism Conspiracy, Cocaine Importation Conspiracy, Possession of Machineguns and Destructive Devices, and Conspiracy to Possess Machineguns and Destructive Devices against the United States. They will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts. On behalf of the entire U.S. DOJ, I would like to thank President Trump for having the courage to demand accountability on behalf of the American People, and a huge thank you to our brave military who conducted the incredible and highly successful mission to capture these two alleged international Narco- traffickers." The Attorney General's remarks come as US President Donald Trump on Saturday said that the US had carried out a large strike against Venezuela during which the incumbent President Nicolas Maduro and his wife "were captured and flown out of the country".



CHINA'S TIBET DAM PUSH RAISES REGIONAL ALARM OVER WATER SECURITY AND CONTROL

Diary Times Desk : China has confirmed the launch of a massive hydropower project on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet, triggering renewed concerns over environmental risks, downstream water security and China's tightening grip over the region, as reported by Phayul. According to Phayul, in his New Year address, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that construction had begun in Medog County, a geologically fragile and ecologically sensitive area near the India-China border. The Yarlung Tsangpo, known downstream as the Brahmaputra, is one of Asia's most important rivers, sustaining millions of people across India and Bangladesh. Analysts warn that large-scale hydropower development in such a volatile zone could significantly alter river flow patterns and increase disaster risks. Environmental experts have highlighted that the river cuts through one of the world's deepest gorges, making the region especially vulnerable to landslides.

RUSSIA CALLS US ACTION AGAINST MADURO "ACT OF AGGRESSION", SAYS REASON "UNTENABLE"

Diary Times Desk : The Russian Foreign Ministry has called the US strike on Venezuela and the subsequent capture of incumbent President Nicolas Maduro as an act or armed aggression and said that the pretext used to justify the action is untenable. In a statement the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry said, "This morning, the US committed an act of armed aggression against Venezuela. This development gives rise to deep concern and warrants condemnation. The pretexts used to justify these actions are untenable. Ideologized animosity has prevailed over pragmatic engagement, as well as over any readiness to build relations based on trust and predictability." "In the current situation, it is essential above all to prevent further escalation and to focus on finding a solution through dialogue. We proceed from the understanding that all parties that may have grievances against

US STRIKES IN VENEZUELA: CHILEAN PRESIDENT CALLS FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION THROUGH DIALOGUE, MULTILATERALISM



Diary Times Desk : Chilean President Gabriel Boric on Saturday gave a call for peaceful resolution after American strikes in Venezuela where the US "captured" President Maduro and his wife. The Chilean President condemned the military action and said that the crisis must be resolved through dialogue and multilateralism.

In a post on X he said, "As the Government of Chile, we express our concern and condemnation of the military actions by the United States taking place in Venezuela, and we call for seeking a peaceful solution to the serious crisis affecting the country. Chile reaffirms its commitment to basic principles of International Law, such as the prohibition of the use of force, non-intervention, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, and the territorial integrity of States. The Venezuelan crisis must be resolved through dialogue and the support of multilateralism, and not through violence or foreign interference." Donald Trump on Saturday said that the US had carried out a large strike against Venezuela during which the incumbent President Nicolas Maduro and his wife "were captured and flown out of the country". The Russian Foreign Ministry has called the US strike on Venezuela and the subsequent capture of incumbent President Nicolas Maduro as an act or armed aggression and said that the pretext used to justify the action is untenable. In a statement the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry said, "This morning, the US committed an act of armed aggression against Venezuela.

MADURO TO STAND TRIAL ON CRIMINAL CHARGES IN US, SAYS UTAH SENATOR MIKE LEE

Diary Times Desk : Utah Senator Mike Lee said on Saturday he was informed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was arrested by U.S. personnel to stand trial on criminal charges in the United States.

In a post on X on his personal account, Lee said that the action by the US, "likely falls within the president's inherent authority under Article II of the Constitution to protect U.S. personnel from an actual or imminent attack".

He said, "Just got off the phone with @SecRubio. He informed me that Nicolas Maduro has been arrested by U.S. personnel to stand trial on criminal charges in the United States, and that the kinetic action we saw tonight was deployed to protect and defend those executing the arrest warrant. This action likely falls within the president's inherent authority under Article II of the Constitution to protect U.S. personnel from an actual or imminent attack. Thank you, @SecRubio, for keeping me apprised" His remarks come as President Donald Trump on Saturday said that the US had carried out a large strike against Venezuela during which the incumbent President Nicolas Maduro and his wife "were captured and flown out of the country".

KEEPING TRACK OF SITUATION IN VENEZUELA, PM MELONI IS BEING INFORMED: ITALY'S FOREIGN MINISTER

Diary Times Desk : Italian Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on Saturday that he is following developments in Venezuela and that Italian PM Giorgia Meloni is being kept constantly informed. His remarks come as President Donald Trump on Saturday said that the US had carried out a large strike against Venezuela during which the incumbent President Nicolas Maduro and his wife "were captured and flown out of the country". "I am following the evolution of the situation with our diplomatic representation in Caracas, with particular attention to the Italian community. The Prime Minister @GiorgiaMeloni is constantly informed. The Farnesina's crisis unit is operational," Tajani said in a post on X. The "capture of Maduro" comes amid sharply heightened tensions between the United States and Venezuela. Trump has repeatedly accused the Venezuelan President.

US JOURNALIST SAYS, VENEZUELA VP DELCY RODRIGUEZ TO BE ANNOUNCED AS INTERIM PRESIDENT



Diary Times Desk : Investigative Journalist Laura Loomer said on Saturday citing sources that Delcy Rodriguez, who is presently serving as the Vice-President of Venezuela, is going to be announced as the interim President of Venezuela. This comes after the President of the United States Donald Trump on Saturday confirmed that the US had carried out a large strike against Venezuela during which the incumbent President Nicolas Maduro and his wife were captured and taken out of the country. Laura Loomer said in a post on X, "NEW: Source tells me that @delcyrodriguez Delcy Rodriguez, the Vice President of Venezuela is going to be announced as the interim President of Venezuela today following US airstrikes on Venezuela and the announcement by President Trump that @NicolasMaduro has been "captured" by US Special Forces and flown out of the country." The capture of Maduro, as confirmed by Trump, comes amid sharply heightened tensions between the United States and Venezuela. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly accused the Venezuelan President of presiding over what he has described as a "narco-terrorist" government.

TAIWAN CALLS CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY "DISGUSTING AND SICK" OVER ALLEGED INFORMATION WARFARE

Diary Times Desk : Taiwan's National Security Council Secretary-General Joseph Wu on Saturday strongly criticised the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), calling it a "disgusting and sick" regime over alleged information warfare and transnational repression targeting Taiwan. In a post on X, Wu highlighted what he called Beijing's double standards on social media platforms. "For those unaware, both @X & #Facebook are banned in #China. Yet the communist regime runs official accounts just to wage information warfare against #Taiwan. I'm being modest when I describe the #CCP regime as disgusting & sick," Wu wrote. His remarks came after another post on X condemned Chinese state media for posting personal information of Taiwanese lawmaker Puma Shen. The post said, "The #CCP is a sick, disgusting regime. Its state media posted @PumaShen's private info on an official #Facebook page, an act of transnational repression.

TAKAICHI'S HARDLINE TAIWAN STANCE FUELS CHINA TENSIONS, POLICY CONCERN IN JAPAN

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's comments on Japan's potential role in a Taiwan emergency have fuelled tensions with China and raised concerns that the lack of moderating voices around her could leave her hardline positions largely unchecked, Kyodo News reported. With senior moderates within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and a centrist coalition partner distancing themselves from Takaichi, doubts are growing about her ability to manage diplomacy beyond China and coordinate broader economic and social policies, according to Kyodo News. An opposition lawmaker warned that Takaichi's decision to form a coalition with a conservative party ahead of becoming Japan's first female prime minister on October 21 "has left few remaining checks on her hardline course." Takaichi is widely seen as the political heir to former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

"NICOLAS MADURO AND HIS WIFE CAPTURED, FLOWN OUT OF COUNTRY": US PRESIDENT TRUMP AFTER STRIKES ON VENEZUELAN CAPITAL CARACAS

Diary Times Desk : President of the United States Donald Trump on Saturday confirmed that the US had carried out a large strike against Venezuela during which the incumbent President Nicolas Maduro and his wife were captured and taken out of the country. "The United States of America has successfully carried out a large scale strike against Venezuela and its leader, President Nicolas Maduro, who has been, along with his wife, captured and flown out of the Country. This operation was done in conjunction with U.S. Law Enforcement. Details to follow. There will be a News Conference today at 11 A.M., at Mar-a-Lago. Thank you for your attention to this matter! President DONALD J. TRUMP," the US President posted on Truth Social. The capture of Maduro, as confirmed by Trump, comes amid sharply heightened tensions between the United States and Venezuela. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly accused the Venezuelan President of presiding over what he has described as a "narco-terrorist" government. The US had also imposed sanctions on vessels it claims are involved in transporting Venezuelan oil. At the same time, the US military stepped up actions against Venezuelan boats in the region, alleging their involvement in drug and narcotics smuggling. Trump has called on Maduro to step down, accusing Venezuela of doing "terrible things" against the United States. Meanwhile, the Venezuelan government on Saturday issued a statement rejecting and condemning what it described as a "military aggression" by the United States against Venezuelan territory.



LAWLESSNESS DEEPENS IN BALOCHISTAN AS KIDNAPPINGS SHAKE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

Diary Times Desk : Escalating incidents of kidnapping for ransom in Balochistan's Kech district have sparked renewed concerns over the breakdown of law and order, with political leaders warning that continued official inaction is eroding public safety and damaging the local economy. The situation has created a climate of fear among residents and traders alike, as reported by Dawn.

According to Dawn, Abdul Malik Baloch, president of the National Party, raised the alarm during a press conference at the Turbat Press Club. The event was organised under the banner of All Parties Kech, a multi-party platform representing political and civil stakeholders in the district. Baloch warned that the worsening security environment was undermining public confidence and paralysing commercial activity. During the briefing, participants highlighted the recent abduction for ransom of two well-known businessmen from Kech Haseeb Yasin, son of Haji Yasin, and Shah Nawaz Gul Jan, son of Haji Gul Jan Rind. Their disappearance has triggered widespread anxiety across the district, particularly within the trading community, which already operates under difficult economic conditions.

RUSSIA'S DMITRIEV ACCUSES EU'S KALLAS OF SEEKING WAR WITH CHINA AND RUSSIA

Diary Times Desk : A senior Russian official has intensified criticism of the European Union's foreign policy leadership, accusing EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas of pushing the bloc toward confrontation with both Russia and China, reports Sputnik.

Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and Russia's special presidential envoy for economic cooperation with foreign countries, made the remarks in a comment on X, formerly Twitter, responding to a user's post that shared a video of Kallas. In the video, Kallas questions how the European Union can speak about taking on risks related to China if it is unable to effectively pressure Russia. "Idiotic Kaja wants the EU at war with Russia AND China," Dmitriev wrote, amplifying Moscow's accusations that EU leaders are pursuing an aggressive and destabilizing foreign policy agenda. Kallas, who assumed the role of the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in late 2024, is known for her firm stance on Russia.

UNION MINISTER HARDEEP SINGH PURI HIGHLIGHTS INDIA'S GROWTH TO 132 COMPRESSED BIO GAS PLANTS

Diary Times Desk : India has established 132 Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) plants with a total production capacity of 920 tonnes per day (TPD) as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance renewable energy infrastructure, said Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri on X. The government is currently expanding this capacity through the Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) initiative.

"What was once waste is now powering progress. India has 132 Compressed Bio Gas plants producing 920 TPD today, with more capacity coming up under SATAT. Turning farm and organic waste into clean fuel, rural income and lower emissions under the leadership of PM @narendramodi ji," the Minister said. SATAT was launched on 1st October 2018, aiming to establish an ecosystem for the production of CBG from various waste/biomass sources in the country. Under SATAT, Oil and Gas Marketing Companies, IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, GAIL and IGL have invited Expression of interest (EoI) to procure CBG from potential entrepreneurs for further marketing.

FOREIGN INVESTORS TO STAGE COMEBACK IN INDIAN EQUITIES IN 2026; AI EXPOSURE GAP MAY POSE RISK

Diary Times Desk : After a bruising 2025 for overseas investors, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) could be staging a comeback in Indian equities in 2026. Market strategists say the conditions that triggered record outflows last year are easing while earnings visibility, valuations, and macro stability are turning supportive.

In its report titled "India Equity Strategy 2026", Antique Stock Broking Limited said the FPI equity outflow in the Calendar Year 2025 was highest on absolute basis at USD 17.5 bn (or 0.3% of market cap). We believe that CY26 could see a revival as the six-month FPI equity flow as a percentage of market cap is at (-1) Standard Deviation; Low FPI ownership in India despite strong earnings growth and macro outlook; Reasonable equity valuation, relative to other emerging and developed markets; and Low market beta.

10-MINUTE DELIVERY: 'ZOMATO CEO TRYING TO SAVE HIMSELF,' SAYS GIG WORKERS' UNION

Diary Times Desk : Shaik Salauddin, founder president, Telangana Gig & Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU), on Saturday alleged, "the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Zomato, Deepinder Goyal is trying to save himself, and at an organizational level, he has come under pressure." "Goyal's response on the crisis through his posts on social media platform X (formerly twitter) helped the common masses to understand what was going on internally. However, many of our questions still remained unanswered," he said. He said the CEOs of the food delivery apps, and the gig workers can come and sit together to discuss what is right and what went wrong to close the matter. "Even after the repeated threats from the CEOs, the gig workers continued the peaceful strikes resulting in delays in 60% of orders," he added. "If the problems are not resolved, then let me tell you, this was just a teaser, more it yet to come," he said. "10-minute delivery is a mental, and physical stress for all the delivery boys. This should be removed immediately," he said. Notably, Zomato's Deepinder Goyal has reiterated his position after a purported strike call by certain gig workers brought the gig-model.



GENERIC SEMAGLUTIDE PATENT EXPIRY OPENS OVER RS 50,000 CRORE OPPORTUNITY FOR DRUGMAKERS: REPORT

Diary Times Desk : The impending patent expiry of semaglutide drugs across India, emerging markets and select regulated markets such as Canada and Brazil is expected to unlock a revenue opportunity exceeding Rs 50 billion for generic drug manufacturers over the next 12-15 months, according to an industry update by Systematix Institutional Research. The opportunity is likely to be shared among 10-15 Indian and global generic players. For FY27, incremental revenues are estimated at Rs 10-20 billion from India's branded formulations market, around Rs 45 billion from regulated markets like Canada and Brazil, and Rs 5-10 billion from emerging markets. While regulated markets could see a sharp near-term upside, the opportunity there may moderate over time due to pricing pressure and competition, the report noted. In India, the launch of generic semaglutide, expected in the first quarter of FY27, is projected to boost overall Indian Pharmaceutical Market (IPM) growth by 0.5-1%. Prices are anticipated to be 30-50% lower than current levels initially, with the potential for deeper cuts of up to 70-75% over time.



GIG MODEL DOESN'T PRESSURE RIDERS, FLEXITIME WORK RELIABLE INCOME SOURCE FOR MANY: DEEPIINDER GOYAL

Diary Times Desk : Amid the debate on gig workers' payouts and working conditions, Eternal Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said this model does not pressure riders, and flexible schedules and welfare benefits make gig work a reliable source of income for many.

Eternal owns Zomato and Blinkit. His remarks come at a time when gig workers' unions have been staging protests, demanding better payouts and improved working conditions. "In 2025, Zomato and Blinkit spent over Rs 100 crore on insurance coverage for delivery partners. In 2025, average earnings per hour (EPH), excluding tips, for a delivery partner on Zomato were Rs 102. In 2024, this number was Rs 92. That's a Rs 10.9 pc year-on-year increase. Over a longer horizon also, EPH has shown steady growth," Goyal said on X. He claimed that the 10-minute delivery promise does not pressure riders, explaining how flexible schedules and welfare benefits make gig work a reliable source of income for many. However, his comments drew mixed responses from internet users on X, with several accusing riders of rash driving and violating traffic rules to meet 10-minute delivery deadlines. The Gig & Platform Services Workers' Union (GIPSWU) last month wrote to Union Minister for Labour and Employment Mansukh Mandaviya raising several issues, with a key highlight being their demand to "urgently discontinue 10-20-minute service delivery mandates to prioritise worker safety".



CHANDRABABU NAIDU CREDITS POLICY REFORMS FOR ANDHRA PRADESH'S LEAD WITH 25.3% SHARE IN PROPOSED INVESTMENTS IN FY26

Diary Times Desk : Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N Chandrababu Naidu, said that the state's emergence as India's primary investment magnet is a result of forward-looking policy reforms and "Speed of Doing Business" initiatives. In a post on X, Naidu shared a media report and said that the recent data is "welcome news for the people of Andhra Pradesh and a strong start to the year." The state captured a massive 25.3 per cent share of proposed investments in the first nine months of the 2026 fiscal year, according to a report from the Bank of Baroda. The Chief Minister noted that the state's performance reflects the impact of specific measures, including "introducing the concept of an escrow-based mechanism for timely and transparent incentive distribution" and the "introduction of clear, sector-specific policies." Naidu thanked the investors who chose Andhra Pradesh for growth and for the "confidence they have placed in our vision." He also acknowledged the "commitment and efforts of the Government of Andhra Pradesh team," stating that this milestone serves as "a foundation for continued progress."

MUMBAI HOUSING REGISTRATIONS REACH ALL- TIME HIGH IN 2025 AMID AFFORDABILITY CONCERNs: NUVAMA REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Mumbai's real estate market achieved a significant milestone in 2025 as housing registrations reached an all-time high, despite growing concerns regarding affordability and a transition into a mid-cycle stage for the sector. According to a report from Nuvama Institutional Equities, the city recorded 150,294 registered units over the calendar year, representing a 6 per cent increase from the previous year. The total value of these registrations climbed 11 per cent year-on-year to approximately INR 2.25 trillion. This performance was bolstered by a strong year-end surge in December 2025, which saw 14,424 units registered, a 16 per cent rise compared to the same month in 2024.

RELIANCE JIO REGISTERS STRONG SUBSCRIBER GROWTH IN NOVEMBER 2025, MAINTAINING BROADBAND LEADERSHIP, SAY LEADING BROKERAGES

Diary Times Desk : Reliance Jio registered strong subscriber growth and maintained its leadership in the broadband segment during November 2025, according to reports from leading brokerages analyzing the latest Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) data. The sector saw a moderate recovery in wireless net additions to 2.0 million from 1.4 million on a month-on-month basis, even as the total active subscriber base declined. Almost all major brokerages, including Morgan Stanley, Jefferies, and Kotak Institutional Equities, presented that Jio was the only private operator to report a net gain in active subscribers during this period.

Reliance Jio added 1.4 million total wireless subscribers and 1.2 million active Visitor Location Register (VLR) subscribers in November. Jefferies noted that "Jio gained 1.2m subs, extending its lead over Bharti for 9 straight months" and "notably, Jio has outperformed Bharti in active subs net adds for the ninth consecutive month". While Bharti Airtel added 1.2 million total wireless subscribers, its active subscriber base declined by 1.7 million. "Over the past year, Jio's active subs market share rose 160bps to 44%, led by gains across all service areas (+100/130/190/150bps in Metros/A/ B/C-Circles). Bharti's market share edged down Rs 10bps to 36%, as losses in C-Circles (-70bps) were partly offset by gains in Metros (+60bps), where Bharti's market share is near record highs at 34%. VIL's share fell 120bps to 15%, led by declines in Metros, A and B-Circles," said Jefferies.



AFTER 5% FALL IN 2025, RUPEE LIKELY TO EASE IN 2026 AT AROUND RS 92: SBI FUNDS



Diary Times Desk : The pace of rupee depreciation is expected to slow significantly in 2026, after the Indian currency endured its weakest year since 2022 amid foreign fund outflows, trade uncertainty and elevated hedging demand, according to SBI Funds Management.

The rupee fell close to 5% in 2025, underperforming most emerging-market peers even as the US dollar weakened globally. However, SBI Funds Management's 2026 Outlook projects the currency to depreciate by only around 2% in FY27, with the exchange rate expected to stabilise near Rs 92 to the dollar. The outlook is supported by several factors. India's CAD is projected to remain below 1% of GDP, aided by strong services exports and subdued oil prices. At the same time, the US dollar is expected to stay on a softening bias as the Federal Reserve nears the end of its easing cycle, a backdrop that has historically supported emerging-market currencies, the report said. Capital flows could also turn more favourable. Potential inclusion of Indian government bonds in global bond indices, stabilisation in corporate earnings, and the likelihood of renewed FPI equity inflows may ease pressure on the rupee. Additionally, the rupee's real effective exchange rate has fallen to about 5% below its estimated fair value, improving competitiveness and limiting downside risks.

Looking ahead, SBI Funds Management expects a more supportive backdrop for the currency. India's current account deficit is projected to remain below 1% of GDP, supported by strong services exports and subdued crude oil prices. Inflation is expected to stay anchored around the RBI's 4% target, reducing the risk of macro-driven currency shocks. Global factors are also turning favourable. The US dollar is expected to remain on a softening bias as the Federal Reserve approaches the end of its easing cycle, a scenario that has historically supported emerging-market currencies. In addition, the rupee's real effective exchange rate has fallen to about 5% below its estimated fair value, improving competitiveness and limiting downside risks. The Indian rupee recorded its sharpest annual fall since 2022 in 2025, depreciating close to 5% against the US dollar, even as the greenback weakened globally and most emerging-market currencies strengthened. The underperformance, analysts say, was driven less by domestic macro stress.

HIMACHAL REELS UNDER DRY SPELL, MET FORECASTS BELOW-NORMAL RAIN TILL MARCH

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh, already reeling under a prolonged post-monsoon dry spell, is unlikely to get any significant respite between January and March, with the weather set to remain largely dry across most parts of the state. According to the India Meteorological Department's state unit, Himachal is very likely to receive below-normal rain during the January–March period, barring some pockets of Lahaul and Spiti and Kinnaur districts. The department has projected a 55 to 65 per cent probability of below-normal rain in most districts till March, while Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti have a 35 to 45 per cent chance of receiving normal precipitation during this period. For January, there is a 25 to 55 per cent probability of normal to below-normal rainfall in districts such as Kinnaur, Una, Bilaspur and Hamirpur. The remaining parts of the state also fall within a similar probability range of receiving normal rain during the month. Adding to the concern, January is expected to be warmer than usual. The department has forecast a 65 to 75 per cent probability of above-normal minimum temperatures across the state, while maximum temperatures are also likely to remain higher than normal with a 45 to 55 per cent probability.

HIMACHAL PRADESH: 2% LAND REVENUE ON HYDEL PROJECTS SPARKS PUSHBACK

Diary Times Desk : The Himachal Pradesh government's proposal to levy 2 per cent land revenue on hydel power projects has triggered strong opposition from power producers operating in the state. With concerns mounting across the sector, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu is scheduled to hold a meeting with representatives of hydel power companies here tomorrow to address their grievances. As per a notification issued on December 2, 2025, the land revenue will be imposed from January 1, 2026. The levy will be calculated at 2 per cent of the total average market value of the project and will apply to land used by hydel power projects for non-agricultural purposes. The state government estimates that the move will generate nearly Rs 1,800 crore annually, providing much-needed fiscal relief amid a severe financial crunch.

COUPLE KILLED, LOCAL SINGER INJURED AS VEHICLE PLUNGES INTO GORGE IN HIMACHAL'S CHAMBA

Diary Times Desk : A former local BJP couple died, and a local folk singer was injured after their vehicle plunged into a deep gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district, police said on Saturday. The accident occurred late Friday on the Chamba-Tissa Road when the three were en route to Chamba from Churah. Locals informed police after spotting the crashed vehicle on Saturday morning. According to police, Hari Singh and his wife Shiv Dei, residents of Churah, died in the accident, while Jagdish Soni, a local singer from Churah, was injured. Hari Singh was also the former vice-president of the BJP SC Morcha in Chamba. Preliminary investigations suggest that darkness and steep slope might have led to the accident; however, the possibility of overspeeding cannot be ruled out, police added. The exact cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained, they added. A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway.



COLLEGE TEACHER SUSPENDED OVER STUDENT'S DEATH: DHARAMSALA COLLEGE PROFESSOR ACCUSED OF RAGGING

Diary Times Desk : The Education Department has suspended a college teacher named in the FIR related to the death of Pallavi, a 19-year old Dalit student of Dharamsala college. Rakesh Kanwar, Secretary of Education, has ordered the suspension of Assistant Professor Ashok Kumar (Geography), pending the outcome of a departmental inquiry. During the period of his suspension, the headquarters of the college teacher shall be the Directorate of Higher Education in the state capital. He has also been directed not to leave the headquarters without prior permission from the Secretary of Education. The suspension has been ordered following the naming of the teacher in the FIR by the father of the deceased student at Dharamsala. "As per media reports, the prima facie involvement of Ashok Kumar cannot be ruled out. In order to ascertain the facts, disciplinary proceedings against him are contemplated," the suspension order states. "A four-member committee headed by Additional Director Higher Education Harish Kumar, with principals of Dhaliara, Baijnath and Naura government colleges as its members, has been constituted to conduct a fact-finding/preliminary enquiry in the unfortunate death of a student of government college Dharamsala.

NIA INVESTIGATING NALAGARH BOMB BLAST: HIMACHAL CM

Diary Times Desk : The NIA is investigating the Nalagarh bomb blast in Solan district, and anything regarding the perpetrators of the incident will be known once the agency submits its report, said Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday.

Talking to the media persons in Solan district, he said the state forensic experts have taken samples from the site, and CCTV footage of the area is also being scanned. Since the matter is under investigation, anything regarding the perpetrators of the incident could be revealed only after the NIA submits its report, the CM said after laying the foundation stone of the Centre of Excellence for divyangjan (differently-abled) in Kandaghat. Several Nalagarh residents woke up on January 1 to the sound of a blast that happened near a police station in Nalagarh in Solan district on Thursday. However, no casualty or injury to anyone was reported. The impact of the blast that occurred in a lane was so strong that the windows of nearby buildings, including those of an Army canteen 40 metres away, cracked. The loud sound of the blast was heard from a distance of up to 400–500 metres, locals said.

YOUR HOROSCOPE

04-01-2026

Aries

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

Taurus

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

Gemini

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

Cancer

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

Leo

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

Virgo

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

Libra

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

Scorpio

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

Sagittarius

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

Capricorn

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

Aquarius

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

Pisces

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

BJP TO LAUNCH AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON VB G RAM G SCHEME IN PUNJAB FROM JANUARY 7: SUNIL JAKHAR

Diary Times Desk : Bharatiya Janata Party's state president Sunil Jakhar said that the party would launch an awareness campaign from January 7 to inform the public about the Viksit Bharat G Ram G scheme, "which has been formulated in the interest of the poor". In a statement issued here, he said that the campaign will begin from Fazilka district. He added that the Government of India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had always followed the policy of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas", and this scheme was also designed in line with the same policy for the welfare of the poor.

Jakhar said that while the government had increased the number of guaranteed employment days for the poor from 100 to 125, the new scheme also fixed accountability in cases where work was not provided to labourers. He said that with the implementation of this scheme, corruption would be curbed and the entire wage amount would directly reach the labourers' bank accounts.

'GHOST TRUCK' OWNERS CRY FOUL, SAY DIDN'T LIFT PADDY OR CLAIM PAYMENTS

Diary Times Desk : The detection of "ghost trucks" allegedly used to siphon off paddy from grain markets to rice mills has triggered a fresh controversy, with transporters strongly denying any involvement and claiming that their vehicle numbers were misused to create fake transportation records.

An investigation by a special investigation team (SIT) constituted by former Karnal SP Ganga Ram Puniya highlighted that as many as 118 trucks were shown in official records as transporting paddy from grain markets to different mills, while their actual locations were found to be elsewhere. After irregularities were detected at Karnal grain markets and similar allegations surfaced in Kunjpura and Assandh grain markets, transporters whose vehicle numbers appeared in suspicious entries have come forward, claiming that the trips shown in official records never took place. They said their trucks were falsely shown as lifting paddy to rice mills, even though they neither transported the grain nor claimed any payment from the government for such trips.

MISSING SAROOPS: SIT CARRIES OUT SEARCHES AT 15 PLACES ACROSS PUNJAB

Diary Times Desk : The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the disappearance of 328 saroops of Sri Guru Granth Sahib conducted raids at around 15 locations across Chandigarh, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ropar today. The searches were carried out at the residences and offices linked to 16 accused in the case.

Confirming the development, Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar, who is supervising the investigation, said the SIT was proceeding strictly on merit and in accordance with the law. He asserted that all available evidence related to the case would be brought on record during the course of the probe.

Bhullar further maintained that the investigation would be taken to its logical conclusion and warned that no person found guilty would be spared, irrespective of their position or influence.



210 HARYANA'S YOUTHS GET JOBS IN DUBAI: UNION MINISTER MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR

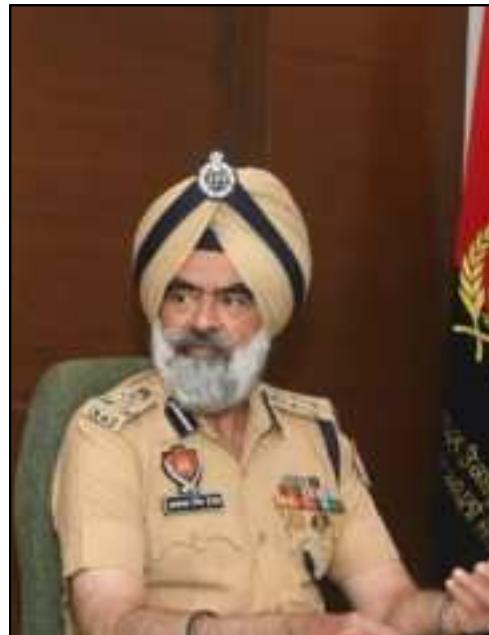
Diary Times Desk : In a major step towards providing safe and legal overseas employment, 210 more youths have been selected for jobs in Dubai through Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam (HKRN). These youths will travel abroad through proper legal channels.

Union Minister for Power, Housing, and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar distributed offer letters to these youths and urged them to focus on skill development along with education and to learn foreign languages to enhance their employment prospects. While chairing a state-level 'Panchjanya 2026' programme organised by State Foreign Cooperation Department and HKRN at Kalpana Chawla Government Medical College's auditorium, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar described the initiative as a unique effort of the Haryana Government, enabling youths to get jobs abroad without any expense, free from middlemen, and away from illegal routes like the 'donkey' route. He added that Haryana has emerged as a leading state in providing such safe and transparent employment opportunities. He said that becoming self-reliant is essential not only for one's own future but also for the welfare of family, society, and the nation. He emphasised that the New Education Policy.

HARYANA GOVT KEEPING STRICT WATCH ON MEDICINE PRICES IN PUBLIC INTEREST: HEALTH MINISTER

Diary Times Desk : Haryana Health Minister Arti Singh Rao said the state government was committed to ensure availability of affordable and essential medicines for the general public. "With this objective, strict monitoring of medicine prices is done in Haryana to effectively curb overcharging at any level," she said. The Health Minister said, "Under guidelines of the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), the Price Monitoring and Resource Unit (PMRU) is actively functioning in Haryana under the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) Department. This unit is ensuring that medicines are available for citizens only at rates fixed by the government." She said, "The objective of the Haryana Government is to ensure that life-saving medicines are available for every citizen at reasonable and regulated prices. All these measures are being taken keeping in view Haryana residents health and welfare." Manoj Kumar, Commissioner, Food and Drugs Administration, said during the year 2025, 33 cases of overcharging of medicines were reported in Haryana, which were sent to the NPPA, New Delhi, for necessary action.

DIG BHULLAR CASE: CBI COURT SEEKS RESPONSE ON BAIL PLEA OF MIDDLEMAN KRISHANU SHARDA



Diary Times Desk : A CBI court in Chandigarh has issued a notice to CBI for January 7 on a bail application filed by middleman Krishanu Sharda, who was arrested along with suspended Punjab DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar in a corruption case.

CBI arrested Bhullar and his alleged aid Krishanu Sharda on October 16, 2025, for seeking bribes from a complainant. CBI received a written complaint dated October 11 from Akash Batta, a resident of Mandi Gobindgarh, District Fatehgarh Sahib, alleging that Harcharan Singh Bhullar, DIG, Ropar Range, Punjab Police, had demanded illegal gratification through his middleman Krishanu Sharda for settling an FIR registered in 2023 at the Sirhind police station against the complainant and for ensuring that no further coercive or adverse police action was taken against his scrap business. After verification, a trap was laid, and both the accused were arrested with bribe money. The counsel of the accused Sharda stated in the bail application that the challan in the case has already been filed and the investigation is complete. The CBI court had earlier dismissed a bail application filed by Bhullar in corruption and disproportionate assets cases. CBI arrested Krishanu from Sector 21, Chandigarh.

EDITORIAL

Drones have already revolutionized warfare.

They're about to do it again

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

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

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

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



Brad Lendon

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

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

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

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

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

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

The evolution of drones

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

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



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Australia's About To Find Out

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



Hilary Whiteman

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

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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites



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

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

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

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

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

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

For millions of children, it could be the first school break they spend in years without the company of time-killing social media algorithms, or an easy way to contact their 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$32 million).

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

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

INFA

A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A blue school bag

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



'RE-ENCHANTING THE FAMILIAR AND THE FUNCTIONAL' — LES LALANNE

Diary Times Desk : After the space-age monochrome modernism of the 1960s, the 1970s ushered in a renewed interest in nature and the organic — exemplified by the works of François-Xavier (1927–2008) and Claude Lalanne (1925–2019).

Les Lalanne, as they became known collectively, were one of the most dynamic art couples of the 20th century. Courted by Surrealists and celebrities alike, their distinctive blend of fine and decorative arts, which was based on naturalistic forms, has made their work highly prized by contemporary collectors.

When Claude passed away in April 2019 at the age of 94, French president Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte, released a statement of condolences, speaking of how the couple kneaded together 'imagination, humour and poetry' to create works that 're-enchant the familiar and the functional'.

François-Xavier Lalanne moved to Paris at the age of 18 and rented a studio in the Impasse Ronsin, an artists' enclave in Montparnasse. His neighbour was Constantin Brancusi, whom he often visited bearing vodka and cigarettes. The great sculptor introduced Lalanne to the circle of Surrealists — including Max Ernst and Man Ray — who proved to be highly influential for the young artist.

Claude met her future husband at an exhibition of his work in 1952. They soon moved in together but did not marry until 1967. Now known as the Moutons de Laine, François-Xavier's celebrated sheep sculptures were first presented with the title Pour Polythème, a reference to a passage in Homer's *Odyssey*, which describes how Ulysses and his comrades blind the cyclops Polyphemus and escape from his cave by clinging to the bellies of his giant sheep. Additional sheep by the artist were cast of bronze or epoxy stone.

François-Xavier's first private commission was a sculptural bar for the home of fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Bergé. It was offered in the legendary auction of the couple's collection at Christie's in 2009, and sold for €2,753,000, more than 15 times its low estimate. Saint Laurent particularly enjoyed lounging on his Lalanne sheep in his garden.

The couturier also worked with Claude Lalanne, whose gilt metal castings from the body of supermodel Verushka were incorporated into the designer's *Empreintes* collection of 1969.



COLLECTING GUIDE: JEAN DUNAND

Diary Times Desk :

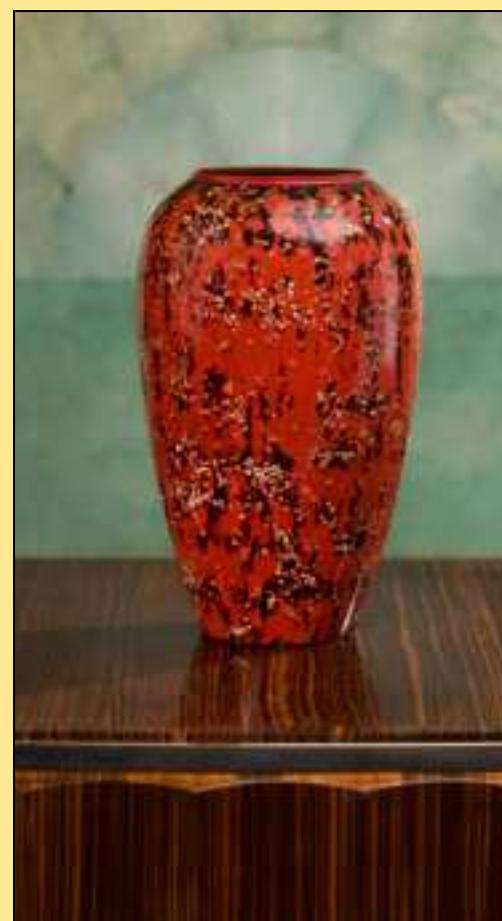
Much like his talent, Jean Dunand's fame knows no bounds. Works by Dunand, who is widely considered one of the Art Deco era's preeminent artists and designers, graced the homes of top aesthetes during his day, and his vases, screens, and other designs remain popular fixtures in esteemed collections today. Given his extraordinary eye and hand, Dunand was also selected for numerous public commissions, including world's fairs.

'What makes Dunand so special is the refinement of his technique. His iconography is very much in line with the 1920s — it's geometric and graphic but with very modern and pure lines,' says Daphné Riou, Head of Christie's Design Department in New York, on what makes the Swiss-born French artists' creations so timeless. 'The shapes are so simple, yet so chic, so they go really well with contemporary art and give a sophisticated touch to any interior.'

Below, discover the many materials Dunand mastered throughout his career, the synergies between his work and Asian art, as well as the artistic movements of his time.

As the son of a goldsmith who was later trained as a sculptor, Dunand worked across categories while constantly elevating his skill set. From dresses and belt buckles to tables and armoires, the pieces he produced were all exquisitely crafted, but it was his vases and screens that were his most sought after then and now. On several occasions, Dunand was commissioned to design entire rooms full of his panels for both private residences and commercial spaces. In 1925–26, at the height of his career, for example, he created a music room for Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Guggenheim.

Early on, Dunand developed a fascination with metals, and prior to the First World War, he became the most brilliant dinandier, or worker in non-precious metals, of his era. The unique finish of his metal vessels resulted from extensive research into and experimentation with patination. Dinanderie was a technique of creating a structure by applying single sheets of metal and then delicately hammering other metals atop for further decoration. Dunand, and Claudio Linossier a decade later, were considered the masters of this technique. Born in Johoji, Japan and trained as a lacquerer, Seizo Sugawara came to Paris to curate the lacquerware displayed in the Japanese exhibition at the 1900 Exposition Universelle. He decided to remain in Paris and hoped to make a living teaching the skills of his profession.



BARCELONA, BAYERN MUNICH CLOSELY MONITORING 21-YEAR-OLD CENTRE-BACK IMPRESSING IN ITALY



Diary Times Desk : It is no secret that Barcelona are eyeing defensive reinforcements in this ongoing January transfer window, as the club eye a replacement for the injured Andreas Christensen.

Although the Catalans have recently been handed the opportunity to re-sign right-back Joao Cancelo, the team is more interested in signing a centre-back.

That is where Tiago Gabriel has emerged as a potential target for the Blaugrana, as they continue their search for a Christensen replacement, reports Santi Aouna. A centre-back by trade, Tiago Gabriel is a product of the Sporting CP youth academy who is currently plying his trade for Serie A outfit Lecce.

Standing at 1.96m, Tiago has been an ever-present figure in the Lecce defensive line, impressing onlookers with his ability in the air. His physical build also lets him dominate attackers both physically and aerially, making him a daunting presence for the attackers.

BARCELONA PRESIDENT TO SPEAK TO FLICK AND DECO TO DECIDE ON JANUARY MOVE FOR FORMER DEFENDER

Diary Times Desk : Joao Cancelo has emerged as an unexpected talking point for Barcelona in this ongoing January transfer window.

The Portuguese international is keen on leaving Al Hilal and wants to return to Europe, as he keeps one eye on the upcoming FIFA 2026 World Cup.

Recent reports have indicated Cancelo is desperate to rejoin his former club, Barcelona, and is waiting for the Catalan club to contact him.

Barcelona, though, have not exactly made a final decision regarding Cancelo. While the club have been in contact with his agent, Jorge Mendes, some reports have indicated they have doubts about a move due to his high salary.

Keeping that in mind, it appears the Barcelona bosses are looking to get rid of the Cancelo dilemma once and for all by holding a special meeting.

According to Fabrizio Romano, Barcelona president Joan Laporta will speak to sporting director Deco and head coach Hansi Flick to decide what to do with Cancelo.

BARCELONA SQUAD LIST TO FACE ESPANYOL – KEY DUO RECEIVES MEDICAL DISCHARGE

Diary Times Desk : FC Barcelona will take a short trip tonight to take on their cross-town rivals, RCD Espanyol, in their first game of 2026.

Ahead of the Catalan derby set to be played at Cornellà-El Prat, Barcelona head coach Hansi Flick has announced the squad list of players available at his disposal.

The big news for Barça is that key midfielders Pedri and Dani Olmo have recovered from their fitness problems and return to the squad, having received the medical green light.

Pedri had missed the last game of 2025 due to mild discomfort, but has been able to mount a quick recovery. As for Olmo, he had been sidelined for a month now due to a dislocated shoulder, but has now been able to make a comeback to the squad.

However, Ronald Araujo is not yet ready to return despite having trained with the squad, as he continues to focus on his mental health recovery. Andreas Christensen is out for the long run with a partial ACL tear, while Gavi is still a month away from making a comeback.

BARCELONA KEEPING AN EYE ON 17-YEAR-OLD SPANISH DEFENSIVE PRODIGY – REPORT

Diary Times Desk : While Barcelona are currently navigating the dilemma of bringing Joao Cancelo back to the team, the club are also keeping tabs on several talented players across the world. Barcelona are always open to beefing up their ranks in the youth department, which has produced several first-team players for the team in the recent past.

Keeping that in mind, Barcelona have emerged as one of the clubs keeping an eye on Roberto Rosado, a young fullback making waves in the youth divisions of Spanish football, reports SPORT. A left-back by trade, Rosado currently plies his trade for Cadiç's U19 squad. At the age of just 17, he has raised many eyebrows with his technical abilities.

At a young age, Rosado has shown the ability to cover the entire flank with his attacking prowess and pace, making him an attractive prospect for clubs like Barça. While the report points out that many clubs across Europe are keeping tabs on Rosado, Barcelona have emerged as the most determined team to try and acquire his services.

ESPAÑOL ULTRAS HURL DEPLORABLE CHANTS

TARGETING BARCELONA STAR

Diary Times Desk : Several factors make Barcelona's clash against Espanyol later today one of the most heated Catalan derbies in recent times.

For starters, it is the first time in years that both teams are doing phenomenally well on a sporting level at the time of their meeting, with Barcelona being league leaders and Espanyol firmly in fifth place.

The bigger factor behind rising tensions, however, is the transfer of Joan Garcia in the summer. The goalkeeper, after all, was an Espanyol star until last season and made the forbidden move to Barcelona in the summer to pursue his dream. It is well known that the RCDE Stadium will present a very hostile environment towards Joan Garcia later today when the game begins, and understandably so because they feel hard done by his transfer to Barcelona. While loyalty and faith do indeed play a vital role in the sport, there is an unsaid line that must not be crossed, but a section of the Espanyol fans are already beginning to cross it. "We want Joan's head," several Espanyol ultras were seen campaigning ahead of the game today, and it is clear that wishing death on a player for his professional decision is a line that must not be crossed.

BARCELONA-BOUND YOUNGSTER TO RENEW CONTRACT BEFORE LOAN MOVE

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona are moving steadily towards securing the arrival of one of Egyptian football's most exciting young prospects. According to a report from SPORT, Hamza Abdelkarim is on the verge of renewing his contract with Al Ahly before completing a loan move to Barcelona. The operation has now entered a decisive phase after weeks of background work by Barcelona's sporting department.

The Catalan club had identified Abdelkarim as a long-term development project, keeping a close eye on his progress before accelerating talks in recent weeks.

With both clubs aligned on the structure of the deal, the path now appears clear. Al Ahly are expected to finalise a new four-year contract for the youngster in the coming days. This renewal is seen as a crucial step before approving his temporary departure to Barcelona. From the Egyptian club's perspective, extending Abdelkarim's deal protects their sporting and financial interests in case he returns after the loan spell.

