

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**MANDAVIYA'S PRONUNCIATION SLIP ON MOHUN BAGAN, EAST BENGAL TRIGGERS POLITICAL ROW IN BENGAL**

**Diary Times Desk :**

In West Bengal where football loyalties are inherited like surnames and club names are uttered with near-religious reverence, a linguistic slip by Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has kicked off an unexpected political derby, with TMC playing a full-throated home game. At a press conference in New Delhi on Tuesday to announce that the Indian Super League (ISL), which was on pause due to the lack of a commercial partner, will resume from February 14, Mandaviya triggered a row by stumbling over the names of Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, two institutions that define not just the city's sporting soul but much of its cultural grammar. As cameras rolled, the minister's pronunciation briefly wandered offside. He paused, sought help, corrected himself and moved on. Social media did not. "Mohun Bagan... East Bagan," Mandaviya said, before correcting himself to "East Bengal" in a clip that soon went viral. The mispronunciation, phonetically.

**LOOKING FORWARD TO INTERACTING WITH STUDENTS AT PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA: PM MODI**

**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he was looking forward to interacting with students, parents and teachers on different aspects of exams in this annual "Pariksha Pe Charcha" event. The Prime Minister, in a post on X, said he was awaiting to hear questions and experiences from exam warriors that can motivate others. "The Class X and XII board exams are approaching and so is this year's #ParikshaPeCharcha," he said. "Looking forward to interacting with students, parents and teachers on different aspects of exams, most notably ways to overcome exam stress, remaining calm, confident and appearing for exams with a smile," the prime minister said. Approximately 45 lakh candidates are expected to appear in 204 subjects across classes X and XII from India and 26 countries abroad.

## DONALD TRUMP NEWS

## 'SIR, MAY I SEE YOU PLEASE?' TRUMP RECOUNTS PM MODI'S 'REQUEST' FOR APACHE HELICOPTERS



**Diary Times Desk :** US President Donald Trump on Tuesday (local time) boasted about India-US defence cooperation, claiming that India's order for 68 Apache attack helicopters was delayed by five years and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally raised concerns over the long delivery period during a meeting with him.

Speaking at the House GOP Member Retreat, Trump highlighted defence cooperation between the United States and India and criticised what he described as years-long delays in supplying defence equipment.

"India ordered 68 Apache helicopters. PM Modi came to me and said 'Sir, may I see you please?' and I said yes," Trump said, while recalling his interaction with PM Modi. Trump also reiterated his good relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi; however, he underscored PM Modi's unhappiness over the high tariffs imposed on India for purchasing Russian oil.

"I have a very good relationship with PM Modi, but he is not happy with me as India is paying high tariffs. But now they have reduced it very substantially, buying oil from Russia..." he added. The tariffs, totalling 50 per cent, were imposed due to India's significant purchases of Russian oil, which the US sees as supporting Russia's economy amid the Ukraine conflict.

Trump's remarks came a day after he warned that Washington could further raise tariffs on Indian goods if New Delhi does not address US concerns over Russian oil imports. "They wanted to make me happy, basically. Modi is a very good man; he is a good guy. He knew I was not happy, and it was important to make me happy," he said.

## 'FARQ SAMJHO, SIR JI': RAHUL POSTS VIDEO CONTRASTING INDIRA GANDHI WITH MODI AFTER TRUMP'S REMARKS

**Diary Times Desk :** In the backdrop of US President Donald Trump's recent remarks on his ties with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and tariffs, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday took a swipe at the government and posted an old video in which he had talked about how in 1971 then PM Indira Gandhi had withstood pressure from America.

Trump on Tuesday said that Prime Minister Modi is "not that happy with me" because of the tariffs imposed by Washington on Delhi for its purchases of Russian oil. Trump, delivering remarks at the House GOP Member Retreat, also claimed that "Prime Minister Modi came to see me. 'Sir, may I see you please'. Yes." "I have a very good relationship with him. He's not that happy with me because you know they're paying a lot of tariffs now because they're not doing the oil, but they are, they've now reduced it very substantially, as you know, from Russia," Trump said.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "Farq samjho, sir ji!" The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha shared his own old video in which he had alleged that Prime Minister Modi "surrendered" after a call from US President Trump during the India-Pakistan military conflict. Gandhi had also said that the then prime minister Indira Gandhi didn't budge in the 1971 war despite the US sending its Seventh Fleet. "This is the difference," Gandhi had said.



## ANOTHER HINDU PERSON TARGETED IN BANGLADESH, DIES AFTER JUMPING INTO CANAL TO ESCAPE MOB



**Diary Times Desk :** A 25-year-old Hindu man died after he jumped into a canal to escape a mob which accused him of theft in northwestern Bangladesh, in the latest incident of violence targeting the minority community.

The deceased was identified as Mithun Sarkar, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHCUC) spokesman Kajol Debnath said. Sarkar was chased by a mob accusing him of theft in Naogaon district on Tuesday. To escape, he jumped into a canal but tragically drowned, Debnath said.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Council demanded actions against "alarmingly increased and continued" persecution of minorities. As the date of the general elections draws nearer, communal violence is increasing at an alarming rate, it said, adding that the forum believed the incidents aimed to prevent minority voters from casting votes for candidates of their choice. "The Central Committee of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad has expressed deep anger, concern and strong condemnation over the severity of communal violence," it said.

## 'DHURANDHAR' DETHRONES 'PUSHPA 2' TO BECOME HIGHEST-EARNING HINDI FILM EVER



**Diary Times Desk :** Filmmaker Aditya Dhar's "Dhurandhar" has become the highest-earning Hindi film ever with a net India collection of over Rs 831 crore, the makers said on Wednesday.

With its Day 33 earnings on Tuesday standing at Rs 5.70 crore nett, the Ranveer Singh-starrer's total India nett collection climbed to Rs 831.40 crore, placing it at the No.1 spot among all Hindi releases to date.

"History has been rewritten. With Tuesday's collections, 'Dhurandhar' has officially risen to become the highest-earning Hindi film of all time, a towering achievement that has redefined Indian box office success," the makers said in a statement.

The top position was earlier occupied by the Hindi version of Allu Arjun's 2023 blockbuster "Pushpa 2: The Rule". The Telugu movie had earned Rs 830 crore in Hindi. The other highest-earning Hindi titles are Shah Rukh Khan's "Jawan" and horror comedy "Stree 2", which had earned Rs 643 crore and 627 crore respectively.

The India box office break-up shows a robust run across weeks, with Rs 218 crore in its opening week, followed by Rs 261.50 crore in week two, Rs 189.30 crore in week three and Rs 115.70 crore in week four. The film added Rs 35.80 crore over its fifth weekend before continuing its steady run during the weekdays.

## RAJ KUNDRA NEWS

## BITCOIN 'SCAM': COURT SAYS THERE IS SUFFICIENT MATERIAL TO PROCEED AGAINST RAJ KUNDRA



**Diary Times Desk :** There is sufficient prima facie material to proceed against businessman Raj Kundra for offences punishable under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), a special court here has held while issuing him a summons in an alleged bitcoin scam.

RB Rote, special judge for PMLA cases, on Monday issued a summons to Kundra and Dubai-based businessman Rajesh Satija, asking them to appear on January 19.

The duo was added as accused in a supplementary chargesheet filed by the federal probe agency in September last year.

In the reasoned order, made available on Wednesday, the court stated that the statements of witnesses, prosecution complaint (chargesheet) and the record of the case "prima-facie show" that Kundra and Satija were involved in offences punishable under the PMLA.

"There is sufficient material to proceed against accused Nos 17 and 18 (Kundra and Satija)...ED has made out a prima-facie case to take cognizance...and issue process against them," the court said. Kundra, the agency alleged, received 285 Bitcoins from the "mastermind" and promoter of Gain Bitcoin Ponzi "scam".

## 5 COPS INJURED IN CLASH DURING DEMOLITION DRIVE NEAR DELHI MOSQUE; JUVENILE AMONG 5 HELD



**Diary Times Desk :** Violence erupted during an anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Delhi's Ramliya Maidan area early Wednesday, with some people pelting stones at police personnel, leaving five of them injured.

Police used mild force and teargas to quell the protest that broke out on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday and took five people, including a juvenile, into custody and also detained 10-15 others.

Police sources said the trouble broke out after a social media post claimed that the mosque was being demolished during the anti-encroachment drive.

Soon after, several people gathered there, and some pelted stones and glass bottles at the police and MCD workers, the sources said. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), on the Delhi High Court's direction, was carrying out a demolition drive on land adjoining the mosque and a nearby graveyard at Turkman Gate.



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ROGUE WILD ELEPHANT KILLS 13 IN  
TWO DAYS IN JHARKHAND'S WEST  
SINGHBHUM DISTRICT

**Diary Times Desk :** An elephant killed 13 people in two days in separate attacks in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, creating panic in the region, a senior forest official said on Wednesday. Four others were also injured in the attack by the jumbo, Chaibasa Divisional Forest Officer Aditya Narayan told PTI. The tusker, which had attacked several people in the last few days, entered the Noamundi and Hatgamariah police station areas late on Tuesday and trampled the six people to death, including four members of a family, he said. The same pachyderm claimed the lives of seven people, including three members of a family in the Kolhan region on the previous day, Narayan said. Teams of forest officials with experts from West Bengal's Bankura district have been engaged to drive away the elephant back to the forest, the official said. Meanwhile, six pairs of trains in the Chakradharpur division of South Eastern Railway have been cancelled in the area due to the movement of elephants.

MAHARASHTRA CIVIC POLLS: BJP TIES UP WITH CONGRESS, OWAISI'S  
AIMIM; CM FADNAVIS, SENA OPPOSE MOVE

**Diary Times Desk :** In a surprising move, the BJP forged a post-poll alliance with the Congress and the AIMIM in Maharashtra's two municipal councils, drawing the ire of the state leadership of the ruling as well as Opposition parties, with the grand old party suspending 12 newly-elected councillors in one of these local bodies. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said such arrangements were not approved by the party leadership and violated discipline, while BJP's state ally Shiv Sena called it a betrayal of "coalition dharma". Following the local polls held on December 20, the BJP joined hands with the Congress, its arch-rival, and the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) under the banner of 'Ambernath Vikas Aghadi' to form the Ambernath Municipal Council leadership, sidelining ally Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde. The BJP also struck a similar alliance with the Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and other parties in the Akot Municipal Council in Akola district. Left red-faced, the Congress on Wednesday suspended 12 newly-elected councillors in Ambernath Municipal Council along with its block president for alliance with the BJP.

MANIPUR VIOLENCE: SUPREME COURT ORDERS FORENSIC  
EXAMINATION OF ENTIRE 48-MINUTE AUDIO CLIP



**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered forensic examination of the entire 48-minute audio recording allegedly alluded to the role of former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh in the 2023 ethnic violence. "The entire 48 minutes of the conversation in question along with the admitted voice recordings of the former Manipur CM are available... All the voice recordings furnished to the respondents by the learned counsel for the petitioner shall also be included therewith and forwarded to the National Forensic Science University (NFSU), Gandhinagar," A Bench of Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice K Vinod Chandran ordered. The top court had on December 15, 2025, wondered why the entire available leaked audio clips were not sent for forensic examination. The Bench had said it was a "little disturbed" by the November 20 affidavit of the petitioners that said only select clippings were sent to Gujarat's NFSU Laboratory. It had sought to know why the entire available leaked audio clip of around 48 minutes was not sent to NFSU for examination. Audio clips allegedly implicating the former Manipur Chief Minister in the 2023 ethnic violence were tampered with and not scientifically fit for voice comparison, NFSL Gandhinagar, had on November 3 told the Supreme Court.

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SHIPS OF INDIAN NAVY'S FIRST TRAINING  
SQUADRON TO BE DEPLOYED TO SOUTH EAST  
ASIA

**Diary Times Desk :** Three naval ships and an ICG vessel of the Indian Navy's First Training Squadron will be part of the long range training deployment to South East Asia, reinforcing India's sustained maritime engagement with nations in the region, officials said on Wednesday. The long range training deployment (LRTD) underscores the Navy's emphasis on training excellence while contributing to maritime diplomacy, goodwill and cooperative approach to regional maritime security, the defence ministry said. The ships of the First Training Squadron (ITS) of the Indian Navy — INS Tir, INS Shardul, INS Sujata and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship Sarathi — will be proceeding on an LRTD to South East Asia as part of a training curriculum of the 110th Integrated Officers' Training Course (IOTC), the ministry said in a statement. As part of the deployment, the squadron is scheduled to undertake port calls at Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand, the officials said. The 110th Integrated Officers' Training Course includes six international officer trainees, reflecting Indian Navy's continued commitment to capacity building and professional training of personnel from friendly nations, they said. In addition, personnel from the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force have also embarked.



PUNE PORSCHE CAR CRASH: SC ISSUES NOTICE TO MAHARASHTRA GOVT ON BAIL PLEAS OF TWO ACCUSED

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued notice to the Maharashtra Government on petitions of two accused seeking bail in the Pune Porsche car accident case that claimed two lives last year. On May 19, 2024, a Porsche car, allegedly driven by a 17-year-old boy under the influence of alcohol, fatally knocked down two IT professionals in Pune's Kalyani Nagar area. The accused, Aditya Avinash Sood (52) and Ashish Satish Mittal (37), were arrested on August 19 last year as their blood samples were used for tests in connection with two minors who were in the car along with the 17-year-old main accused at the time of the accident. A bench led by Justice BV Nagarathna issued notice to the state government on their pleas against the Bombay High Court's December 16, 2025 order refusing bail to eight accused, including Sood and Mittal. The juvenile justice board (JJB) had granted bail to the minor accused on lenient terms, sparking nationwide outrage. The bail conditions included writing a 300-word essay on road safety.

'FARQ SAMJHO, SIR JI': RAHUL POSTS VIDEO CONTRASTING INDIRA GANDHI WITH MODI AFTER TRUMP'S REMARKS

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LOOKING FORWARD TO INTERACTING WITH STUDENTS AT PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA: PM MODI



**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he was looking forward to interacting with students, parents and teachers on different aspects of exams in this annual "Pariksha Pe Charcha" event. The Prime Minister, in a post on X, said he was awaiting to hear questions and experiences from exam warriors that can motivate others. "The Class X and XII board exams are approaching and so is this year's #ParikshaPeCharcha," he said. "Looking forward to interacting with students, parents and teachers on different aspects of exams, most notably ways to overcome exam stress, remaining calm, confident and appearing for exams with a smile," the prime minister said. Approximately 45 lakh candidates are expected to appear in 204 subjects across classes X and XII from India and 26 countries abroad. The CBSE exams are likely to start from February 17. More than four crore participants, including 3.75 crore students, have registered for the ninth edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha. The registration for Pariksha Pe Charcha will end on January 11.

NEARLY 6.5 CRORE ELECTORS REMOVED FROM DRAFT ROLLS OF 12 STATES, UTS IN SIR PHASE 2

**Diary Times Desk :** The names of 6.5 crore electors were removed from the draft electoral rolls of nine states and three Union territories published in the past days as part of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) being carried out by the Election Commission. Before Phase 2 of SIR, which commenced on October 27, the 12 states and UTs had 50.90 crore electors. After the separate draft rolls were published, the number of electors dwindled to 44.40 crore. EC officials said the names of those removed from the draft rolls have been put in the 'ASD' or absent, shifted and dead/duplicate category. The EC officials had earlier cited available trends to say that the collection of enumeration forms has been "much less" in urban areas compared to rural areas of the states and UTs covered in the SIR exercise. The draft electoral roll for Uttar Pradesh, published on Tuesday after the SIR exercise, excluded 2.89 crore voters and retained 12.55 crore.

FIR FILED, 5 DETAINED AS POLICE PROBES IF VIOLENCE DURING DELHI DEMOLITION DRIVE WAS PLANNED

**Diary Times Desk :** The Delhi Police on Wednesday registered an FIR and detained five people in connection with the violence that erupted during an anti-encroachment drive near the Syed Faiz Elahi Mosque in Delhi's Ramliya Maidan area, an official said. At least five police personnel were injured after some people allegedly pelted the force with stones and glass bottles when the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was carrying out a court-mandated demolition on the land adjoining the mosque and a nearby graveyard. Teargas shells were fired to disperse the crowd and restore order. The police said five people were detained for questioning. While efforts are on to identify those involved in the stone-pelting incident, police are also probing whether the violence was spontaneous or a planned attempt to disrupt the demolition drive, the official added. Senior police officers said CCTV footage and video clips circulating on social media are being analysed to identify the miscreants. Statements of witnesses.

SC TO HEAR WIFE'S PLEA CHALLENGING SONAM WANGCHUK'S DETENTION ON THURSDAY

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned to January 8 the hearing of a plea filed by Gitanjali J Angmo, the wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, against his detention under the National Security Act. A Bench of Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice P B Varale deferred the matter. "Tomorrow? My brother (Justice Varale) wanted to go through this matter," Justice Kumar observed. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Sonam, agreed to the suggestion. The matter was earlier heard by a Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria. The plea claims the detention is illegal and an arbitrary exercise violating his fundamental rights. On November 24, the top court deferred the matter after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Union Territory of Ladakh, sought time to respond to the rejoinder filed by Angmo. On October 29, the court sought responses from the Centre and the Ladakh administration.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS APOLOGISES TO SHIVAJI MAHARAJ'S DESCENDANT OVER UNVERIFIED CONTENT IN 2003 BOOK

**Diary Times Desk :** Oxford University Press (OUP) India has issued an apology over certain "unverified statements" published in a 2003 book on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, more than 20 years after his 13th descendant, Udayanraje Bhosale, filed a complaint in a court in Maharashtra's Satara district. In a public notice published in an English newspaper on Tuesday, OUP India acknowledged that some statements appearing on pages 31, 33, 34, and 93 of the book Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India, written by American author James Laine, were unverified. The publisher expressed regret over the publication of these statements and apologised to Bhosale and to the public at large "for any distress and anguish caused." The public notice followed a written submission by OUP's former Managing Director, Sayeed Manzar Khan, in the Kolhapur bench of the Bombay High Court, in which he expressed his willingness to apologise to Udayanraje Bhosale, the BJP MP from Satara, and to publish the apology in leading English and Marathi newspapers. The book had triggered a major controversy in January 2004, when more than 150 activists from the Sambhaji Brigade ransacked the renowned Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune.



**US TO GET 30 MILLION-50 MILLION  
BARRELS OF OIL FROM VENEZUELA AT  
MARKET PRICE, SAYS TRUMP**

**Diary Times Desk :** President Donald Trump has said on his social media site that "Interim Authorities" in Venezuela would be providing 30 million to 50 million barrels of "High Quality" oil to the US at its market price.

The announcement on Tuesday came after officials in Caracas announced that at least 24 Venezuelan security officers were killed in the dead-of-night US military operation to capture Nicolás Maduro and spirit him to the United States to face drug charges.

Trump posted on Truth Social that the oil "will be taken by storage ships, and brought directly to unloading docks in the United States". He said the money would be controlled by him as president but it would be used to benefit the people of Venezuela and the United States.

Separately, the White House is organising an Oval Office meeting on Friday with oil company executives regarding Venezuela, with representatives of Exxon, Chevron and ConocoPhillips expected to attend, according to a person familiar with the matter who requested anonymity to discuss the plans. Earlier on Tuesday, Venezuelan officials announced the death count in the Maduro raid as the country's acting president, Delcy Rodríguez, pushed back on Trump, who earlier this week warned she'd face an outcome worse than Maduro's if she does not "do what's right" and overhaul Venezuela into a country that aligns with US interests. Trump has said his administration will now "run" Venezuela policy and is pressing the country's leaders to open its vast oil reserves to American energy companies.

**SUBSTANTIAL RISE IN WEALTH OF INDIAN-ORIGIN ADULTS IN UK OVER  
PAST DECADE: STUDY**

**Diary Times Desk :** Median wealth rose "substantially" for Indian-origin adults in the UK even as the wealth gap between ethnic groups in the country widened significantly over the past decade, new research by the London School of Economics (LSE) has revealed. The LSE's Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion study found that since 2012-14, wealth gains were concentrated among adults from the white British and Indian ethnic groups. While adults in the Pakistani ethnic group experienced a "marked decline" in their wealth, gains for all ethnic groups across Britain were concentrated at the very top. "Taken together, my findings underscore the cumulative disadvantages experienced by many individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds," said Dr Eleni Karagiannaki, LSE Assistant Professorial Research Fellow and author of the study released last month. Her analysis found that while overall wealth has grown, the gains have been unevenly distributed across ethnic groups. "Since 2012/14, median wealth gaps between ethnic groups have widened sharply, with gains concentrated among adults from the white British and Indian ethnic groups," the research concludes.

**SNOW CLOGS TRANSPORT IN EUROPE AS  
PARISIANS TURN TO SKIS**

**Diary Times Desk :** Snow and ice brought misery to travellers in northwest Europe on Wednesday but delight to others who set out to explore a snow-blanketed Paris on sledges and skis. Storm Goretti blew in from the Atlantic coast and hit Paris as daylight broke, dumping heavy snowfall on the city that led to further flight cancellations, traffic snarls and transport disruption. The city's bus services were suspended as shops geared up for the first day of the New Year sales. But tourists and residents enjoyed the rare sight of snow-covered Paris, with a few taking the opportunity to ski down the slopes of Montmartre and along the Champs de Mars gardens below the Eiffel Tower. "It's exceptional, it's incredible. It's magnificent and we're enjoying it. We also came across a lot of tourists and they look so happy," said Pierre, a Parisian out admiring the snowy scenery. People grabbed sledges or even just plastic bags to slide down any slopes they could find.

**BANGLADESH EXPRESSES 'POTENTIAL'  
INTEREST IN PROCURING JF-17 FIGHTER JETS,  
SAYS PAKISTAN MILITARY**

**Diary Times Desk :** Pakistan and Bangladesh air chiefs held talks on "potential procurement" of JF-17 Thunder fighter jets by Dhaka as a mark of deepening defence ties between the two countries, the Pakistani military has said. However, Bangladesh has not yet confirmed whether such a plan exists. The JF-17 Thunder is a single-engine lightweight combat jet developed jointly by the Chengdu Aircraft Corporation (CAC) of China and the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC). Though Pakistan claims that the jet has proved its capabilities during the conflict with India, its effectiveness is not clearly known. Pakistan had extensively used Chinese-origin Chengdu J-10 fighter jets during the May 7-10 conflict with India, according to experts and military officials. A high-level defence delegation led by Chief of the Air Staff, Bangladesh Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, called on Chief of Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force.

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**PHILIPPINES EVACUATES 3,000  
VILLAGERS AFTER ERUPTIONS  
AT MAYON VOLCANO**

**Diary Times Desk :** A series of mild eruptions at the most active volcano in the Philippines has prompted the evacuation of nearly 3,000 villagers in a permanent danger zone on its foothills, officials said on Wednesday. Authorities raised the 5-step alert around Mayon Volcano in the northeastern province of Albay to level 3 on Tuesday after detecting intermittent rockfalls, some as big as cars, from its peak crater in recent days along with deadly pyroclastic flows — a fast-moving avalanche of super-hot rock fragments, ash and gas. Alert level 5 would indicate a major explosive eruption, often with violent ejections of ash and debris and widespread ashfall, is underway. "This is already an eruption, a quiet one, with lava accumulating up the peak and swelling the dome, which cracked in some parts and resulted in rockfalls, some as big as cars," Teresito Bacolcol, the country's chief volcanologist, said. He said it is too early to tell if Mayon's restiveness would worsen and lead to a major and violent eruption given the absence of other key signs of unrest, like a spike in volcanic earthquake and high levels of sulfur dioxide emissions. Troops, police and disaster-mitigation personnel helped evacuate.



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Trump also reiterated his good relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi; however, he underscored PM Modi's unhappiness over the high tariffs imposed on India for purchasing Russian oil. "I have a very good relationship with PM Modi, but he is not happy with me as India is paying high tariffs. But now they have reduced it very substantially, buying oil from Russia..." he added. The tariffs, totalling 50 per cent, were imposed due to India's significant purchases of Russian oil, which the US sees as supporting Russia's economy amid the Ukraine conflict. Trump's remarks came a day after he warned that Washington could further raise tariffs on Indian goods if New Delhi does not address US concerns over Russian oil imports. "They wanted to make me happy, basically. Modi is a very good man; he is a good guy. He knew I was not happy, and it was important to make me happy," he said.



DENMARK, GREENLAND SEEK TALKS WITH RUBIO AFTER WHITE HOUSE SAYS AGAIN IT WANTS THE ISLAND

**Diary Times Desk :** Denmark and Greenland are seeking a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio after the Trump administration doubled down on its intention to take over the strategic Arctic island, a Danish territory. Tensions escalated after the White House said on Tuesday that the "US military is always an option", even as a series of European leaders rejected President Donald Trump's renewed calls for the US to take over Greenland, citing strategic reasons. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen warned earlier this week that a US takeover would amount to the end of the NATO military alliance. "The Nordics do not lightly make statements like this," Maria Martisiute, a defence analyst at the European Policy Centre think tank, said on Wednesday.

'SOME COUNTRIES ADVISE OTHERS ON LOCAL CONFLICTS': JAISHANKAR FLAGS WESTERN HYPOCRISY OVER OP SINDOOR

**Diary Times Desk :** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday took a dig at Western hypocrisy which was at display during Operation Sindoor in May 2025. Jaishankar, while interacting with members of Indian community in Luxembourg, said that countries that are miles away say that they get worried if there is tension, but refuse to look inwards, what risks lie in their own region. "So those who are willing to work with us and be helpful, positive, we have to deal with them in that way. Those who do the kind of things which Pakistan does, we have to deal with it in a different way," Jaishankar said. Jaishankar remarked sardonically at the way several countries advise the others on how to deal with their local conflicts, often without thinking. "Now, to what extent does the developments in the rest of the world affect it?"

TRUMP SAYS INTERIM VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES TO TURN 30-50 MILLION BARRELS OF 'HIGH-QUALITY, SANCTIONED OIL' TO US

**Diary Times Desk :** US President Donald Trump announced on Tuesday that the interim authorities in Venezuela would turn between 30 and 50 million barrels of sanctioned oil to the United States and said that while the oil will be sold at its market price, the money will be controlled by Trump to ensure it is used to benefit the people of Venezuela and the United States. In his post on Truth Social, the US President further said that he has asked Energy Secretary Chris Wright to execute the plan immediately and that the oil would be taken by storage ships and brought directly to the unloading docks in the US. "I am pleased to announce that the Interim Authorities in Venezuela will be turning over between 30 and 50 MILLION Barrels of High Quality, Sanctioned Oil, to the United States of America. This Oil will be sold at its Market Price, and that money will be controlled by me, as President of the United States of America, to ensure it is used to benefit the people of Venezuela and the United States! I have asked Energy Secretary Chris Wright to execute this plan, immediately. It will be taken by storage ships, and brought directly to unloading docks in the United States. Thank you for your attention to this matter!"



WHY IS 'PERFECT FEBRUARY' 2026 TRENDING?

**Diary Times Desk :** Are you tired of mismatched weekdays? Well, get ready to rejoice because February 2026 is being hailed as the "Perfect February"! This rare alignment occurs when the month starts on a Sunday and ends on a Saturday, fitting perfectly into a 4x7 grid with exactly four Sundays, Mondays, and so on.

This phenomenon isn't new; it first gained attention in 2015, and now social media is buzzing with excitement. Users are sharing calendars, memes, and fun facts, with one user calling it "the most satisfying calendar I've ever seen".

But what's fueling this obsession? Is it the promise of a fresh start, or simply the joy of symmetry? Whatever it is, February 2026 is set to be a treat for calendar enthusiasts! "So if my new years diet fails in January it's okay cause February is the perfect month to start," one joked.

Not everyone agrees on what makes a "Perfect February". Some argue it should start on a Monday, citing regional differences in weekly cycles. While 67 countries start their week on Sunday, 160 countries begin on Monday.

INQUILAB MONCHO REJECTS HADI MURDER CHARGESHEET, WARNS OF ESCALATION IF JUSTICE DENIED

**Diary Times Desk :** Slain Bangladeshi student leader Sharif Osman Hadi's party has rejected the police chargesheet in his murder case and accused the state machinery of being involved in the killing. Inquilab Moncho on Tuesday also warned that those who "have shed blood" may be forced to "take blood as well" if justice is not ensured, Bengali daily Prothom Alo reported on Wednesday.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP) Detective Branch on Tuesday pressed formal charges against 17 people, including prime suspect Faisal Karim Masud, in connection with the murder and said Hadi was killed due to "political vengeance" at the behest of Awami League-nominated ward councillor Taizul Islam Chowdhury Bappi. Inquilab Moncho member secretary Abdullah al Jaber said "even a lunatic would not believe" the claim that Hadi was murdered merely on the instructions of a ward councillor, asserting that the party does not accept the chargesheet submitted by police.

He claimed that an entire "criminal syndicate", as well as the "state machinery", was involved in the killing. "Until they are brought to justice, our struggle will not stop. Any charge sheet that does not include their names is not acceptable to us," Jaber said after the conclusion of the party's 'March for Justice' programme.

UK WARNED OF CHINA'S EXPANDING SPY FOOTPRINT AS CHINA PUSHES FOR MEGA EMBASSY IN LONDON

**Diary Times Desk :** Rights groups led by Free Tibet, along with several allied organisations, have renewed their campaign against China's proposed mega embassy at Royal Mint Court in London, arguing that the project poses grave national security threats and heightens risks for already vulnerable exile communities. The UK government is expected to announce its verdict on January 20. Campaigners say the plan goes far beyond normal diplomatic activity and has triggered fresh alarms, as reported by Phayul. According to Phayul, if approved, the Royal Mint Court complex would reportedly become China's biggest embassy in Europe, stretching across nearly 20,000 square metres, close to ten times the scale of a typical mission. Activists highlighted that the size and strategic placement of the facility raise serious concerns about espionage potential and covert intelligence operations. In an open letter to Housing Secretary Steve Reed, UK-based Tibetans and Tibet support groups urged the government to reject the plan outright. The letter warns that the embassy would sit close to vital communication networks, including undersea cables that underpin UK infrastructure. It also references reported assessments by MI5, suggesting the site could pose a substantial risk to national security if approved.



COAS GENERAL DWIVEDI PAYS TRIBUTE AT IPKF MEMORIAL IN COLOMBO DURING OFFICIAL VISIT TO SRI LANKA

**Diary Times Desk :** Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi on Wednesday laid a wreath at the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) Memorial in Colombo, Sri Lanka, as part of his official visit to the island nation, paying homage to the Indian soldiers who laid down their lives during Operation Pawan. According to a post by the Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Indian Army on X, the wreath-laying ceremony was a moment of quiet remembrance and respect for the brave personnel who sacrificed in the service of peace, stability and regional harmony during the IPKF's deployment in Sri Lanka between 1987 and 1990. The ADGPI noted that the IPKF Memorial stands as a lasting tribute to the valour, courage and professionalism of Indian Army troops who served under challenging circumstances during the mission and also commemorates.

US MOVE ON VENEZUELA'S OIL INCREASES PRESSURE ON BRAZIL, PETROBRAS

**Diary Times Desk :** Indications that the United States could push for a revival of oil production in Venezuela, in line with plans outlined by President Donald Trump, are expected to alter the regional energy equation and pose fresh challenges for Brazil and its state-run oil major Petrobras, as reported by Brasil 247. Venezuela, home to the world's largest proven crude reserves, has witnessed a steep fall in oil output over the past decades. Production, which once peaked at nearly 3.5 million barrels per day, has fallen below 1 million barrels per day. Analysts believe that if US policy changes lead to a gradual recovery in Venezuelan output, competition for investment capital in the oil sector across South America will intensify. According to Brasil 247, this potential shift is increasing pressure on Petrobras to speed up key strategic decisions, particularly related to exploration in Brazil's Equatorial Margin.

AFTER WEEKS-LONG PURSUIT US SEIZES RUSSIAN-FLAGGED TANKER IN NORTH ATLANTIC



**Diary Times Desk :** The United States on Wednesday stated that it has seized the Russian-flagged oil tanker, M/V Bella 1, in the North Atlantic Sea after weeks of pursuit by the US Coast Guard warship after it evaded a US blockade of sanctioned oil tankers near Venezuela for over a fortnight.

According to a post on X by the US European Command, the tanker violated US sanctions and was tracked by the US Coast Guard cutter Munro prior to the operation. The command noted that the vessel was seized under a warrant issued by a US federal court.

The Justice Dept & DHS, in coordination with the Dept of War, today announced the seizure of the M/V Bella 1 for violations of US sanctions. The vessel was seized in the North Atlantic pursuant to a warrant issued by a US federal court after being tracked by USCGC Munro," the post read. "This seizure supports the President's proclamation targeting sanctioned vessels that threaten the security and stability of the Western Hemisphere," the post further read.

The operation was conducted by DHS components with support from the Department of War, underscoring a "whole-of-government approach" to protecting US interests and national security. Earlier, RT News shared visuals of a boarding attempt by military personnel on the vessel. Originally named Bella 1, the tanker was sanctioned in 2024 and renamed Marinera.

FARA FILINGS REVEAL PAKISTAN'S US LOBBYING BLITZ, SECURING FATF WHITELIST AFTER INDIA STRIKES TERROR CAMPS IN OP SINDOOR

**Diary Times Desk :** India's swift and precise military action during the May 2025 conflict against Pakistan in Operation Sindoor led Islamabad to US lobbying for securing the FATF whitelist, as India destroyed nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. In fresh disclosures under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), it was revealed that Islamabad launched an aggressive lobbying campaign in Washington, repeatedly reaching out to the American establishment. According to documents submitted to the US Department of Justice and accessed through FARA filings, Pakistan also sought US support to maintain the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) continued whitelisting shortly after Operation Sindoor. The documents also revealed that Islamabad conveyed its concerns and appeals through its registered lobbyists, stressing its political commitment to the international community and requesting US assistance ahead of the FATF plenary scheduled for June 2025. The escalation in May is referred to as India's Operation Sindoor, which came in retaliation for the Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 civilians.

US MILITARY INVASION OF VENEZUELA A 'VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW', SAYS CUBAN ENVOY TO INDIA

**Diary Times Desk :** Terming the recent US military action in Venezuela as an "illegal military invasion", the Cuban Ambassador to India, Juan Carlos Marsan Aguilera, on Wednesday condemned the aggression and called for the immediate release of "legitimate" Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. Speaking to ANI on the escalating crisis in Latin America, the Ambassador expressed shock over the developments, comparing the situation to the Cold War era and the 19th-century imperialist policies.

"I was in my office on the 3rd of January when I received a call informing me that the US made a military aggression towards Venezuela. I was totally surprised. I never imagined that we would come back to the time of the Cold War, where a big country would have this illegal military invasion over a sovereign nation," Aguilera told ANI.



RUSSIA CALLS FOR "GUARANTEED SOVEREIGN DEVELOPMENT" IN LATIN AMERICA, CARIBBEAN AFTER VENEZUELA'S REGIME CHANGE



**Diary Times Desk :** The Russian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday called for "guaranteed sovereign development" across Latin America and the Caribbean after Venezuela's recent regime change, following the US's military action in its capital of Caracas and the capture of ousted leader and deposed dictator Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. It urged respect for national sovereignty and an end to external interference following the US operation in the South American nation. In a strongly worded statement, Moscow reaffirmed its support for Venezuela's right to independently determine its political future and stressed that Latin America and the Caribbean "must remain a zone of peace". The ministry said all countries in the region should be guaranteed sovereign development, free from destructive foreign influence. "We welcome the efforts taken by the country's authorities to protect the state sovereignty and national interests. We reaffirm Russia unwavering solidarity with the Venezuelan people and Government. We wish authorised President of Venezuela Delcy Rodriguez success in resolving the tasks facing the Bolivarian Republic.

PM MODI CONVEYS NEW YEAR GREETINGS TO NETANYAHU

**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday held a telephonic conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to convey New Year greetings. The two also exchanged views on the regional situation. In a post on X, he said, "Glad to speak with my friend, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and convey New Year greetings to him and the people of Israel. We discussed ways to further strengthen the India-Israel Strategic Partnership in the year ahead. We also exchanged views on the regional situation and reaffirmed our shared resolve to fight terrorism with greater determination." This is the first direct conversation between the two leaders since the start of 2026. PM Modi, on December 11, received a phone call from Netanyahu, during which the two leaders reviewed the progress of the India-Israel Strategic Partnership and reaffirmed their shared stance of zero tolerance towards terrorism. According to an official statement, PM Modi and Netanyahu expressed satisfaction.

EARTHQUAKE OF MAGNITUDE 6.2 RATTLES PHILIPPINE SEA

**Diary Times Desk :** An earthquake of magnitude 6.2 rattled the Philippine Sea, a statement by the National Center for Seismology (NCS) said. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 85km. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 6.2, On: 07/01/2026 08:33:00 IST, Lat: 7.27 N, Long: 126.87 E, Depth: 85 Km, Location: Philippine Sea." The Philippine Sea borders the Philippines to its east, but it's a vast part of the western Pacific Ocean, with its floor being the Philippine Sea Plate; while the Philippines has sovereign rights over its adjacent waters (the West Philippine Sea within the South China Sea), the broader Philippine Sea is a large oceanic basin shared with other nations like Japan and Taiwan. The Philippines lies in the Pacific Ring of Fire, a tectonic belt of volcanic arcs and oceanic trenches in the Pacific Ocean. John Dale B Dianala, assistant professor at the National Institute of Geological Sciences, the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

TANKER HANKER: RUSSIA SENDS SUBMARINE TO ESCORT TANKER BEING PURSUED BY US

**Diary Times Desk :** An empty oil tanker, formerly known as Bella 1, has become the latest point of a face-off between the US and Russia as the latter sent naval assets including a submarine to bring it back, as per a Wall Street Journal report on Wednesday. As per the WSJ report, Bella 1 has been trying to evade the US blockade of sanctioned oil tankers near Venezuela for over a fortnight.

The vessel failed to dock in Venezuela and load with oil. Although the ship is empty, the US Coast Guard pursued it into the Atlantic in a bid to crack down on a fleet of tankers that ferry illicit oil around the world, including black-market oil sold by Russia, as reported by Wall Street Journal.

Earlier in December, the vessel's crew engaged in fisticuffs against the US law agencies who tried to board the vessel in December and steamed into the Atlantic. Russia has been concerned by U.S. seizures of tankers that ferry its oil around the world. On Tuesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said it was monitoring "with concern" the situation surrounding the tanker, according to state news agency RIA. Meanwhile, the US military's Southern Command said in a post on X on Tuesday that it was ready to "stand against sanctioned vessels in the region. "Always ready to serve: SOUTH COM remains ready to support our U.S Government agency partners in standing against sanctioned vessels and actors transiting through this region. Our sea services are vigilant, agile, and postured to track vessels of interest. When the call comes, we will be there," the US Southern Command said.



INDIA-UAE POLAR COOPERATION IN ACTION AS EMIRATI SCIENTISTS JOIN INDIA'S ANTARCTIC MISSION

**Diary Times Desk :** India and the United Arab Emirates have taken their growing scientific partnership to Antarctica, with Emirati researchers from Khalifa University joining India's 45th Antarctic Expedition at the Maitri research station, said the Indian embassy in the UAE.

The joint team is studying Antarctica's extreme, Mars-like landscapes to support research in polar science and planetary studies. The collaboration reflects deeper cooperation between the two countries in climate research, earth sciences and space-linked studies. "Emirati researchers from Khalifa University joined India's 45th Antarctic Expedition at Maitri station, exploring Antarctica's Mars-like landscapes to advance polar & planetary science," the Embassy wrote in an X post. The participation of UAE scientists follows a key agreement signed between India and the UAE to strengthen cooperation in polar research. On December 13, 2024, the United Arab Emirates and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance collaboration in polar and ocean research. The MoU was signed between the Emirates Polar Program and India's National Centre for Polar.

SPAIN REITERATES SUPPORT FOR DENMARK, GREENLAND AS US WEIGHS OPTIONS TO ACQUIRE TERRITORY

**Diary Times Desk :** Spain on Tuesday (local time) reiterated its firm support for Denmark and the people of Greenland, stressing that respect for national sovereignty is essential for global peace, amid remarks from the United States about acquiring the Arctic territory. The NATO allies also issued a joint statement on Greenland. Spain reiterates, together with Germany, France, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom, its firm support for Denmark and the people of Greenland. Respect for the sovereignty of countries is essential for peace. That was the greatest lesson the 20th century left us. Let us not forget it," the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sanchez, wrote in a post on X. The statement comes as the White House said it is considering "a range of options" to acquire Greenland, including the possible use of military force. According to CNN, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Tuesday (local time) that acquiring Greenland is viewed.

HOUSING SALES DIP 1 PC LAST YEAR IN TOP-8 CITIES, AVG PRICE GROWS UP TO 19 PC: KNIGHT FRANK

**Diary Times Desk :** Housing sales fell 1 per cent last year to over 3.48 lakh units across eight major cities, with demand stagnating amid an average price rise of up to 19 per cent, according to Knight Frank. In a virtual press conference on Wednesday, real estate consultant Knight Frank India noted that the decline in interest rates on home loans, strong economic growth and lower inflation were some of the key factors that helped in sustaining the housing demand during the 2025 calendar year despite fears of an impending correction. As per the data, the housing sales rose 1 per cent in 2025 to 3,48,207 units across eight major cities of the country. The data pertains to primary residential market only. Knight Frank India CMD Shishir Bajjal said the sales momentum continued last year despite rise in weighted average prices. “The contribution of NRIs in housing sales has risen to 12-15 per cent from single digit a decade ago,” he told reporters. Among cities, sale of residential properties in the Mumbai region rose 1 per cent to 97,188 units. The average housing price rose 7 per cent in the country’s financial capital to Rs 8,856 per sq ft.

STOCK MARKETS DECLINE IN MORNING TRADE ON GEOPOLITICAL CONCERNS, RENEWED TARIFF HIKE THREATS

**Diary Times Desk :** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty drifted lower in early trade on Wednesday as geopolitical tensions and renewed concerns about potential US tariff hikes weighed on investor sentiments. Sustained foreign fund outflows also dragged markets lower during the initial trade. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 169.64 points to 84,909.30 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty went down 42.35 points to 26,128.90. From the 30-Sensex firms, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Bharti Airtel, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, and Maruti were among the biggest laggards. However, Titan, Infosys, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, and Reliance Industries were among the gainers. Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 107.63 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Domestic institutional investors, however, bought stocks worth Rs 1,749.35.

STOCK MARKETS DECLINE FOR 3RD DAY ON GEOPOLITICAL CONCERNS, FRESH TARIFF HIKE THREATS

**Diary Times Desk :** Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty drifted lower for the third day in a row on Wednesday as geopolitical tensions and renewed concerns about potential US tariff hikes weighed on investor sentiment. Sustained foreign fund outflows also dragged the markets lower. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 102.20 points or 0.12 per cent to settle at 84,961.14. During the day, it dropped 445.85 points or 0.52 per cent to 84,617.49. The 50-share NSE Nifty went down by 37.95 points, or 0.14 per cent, to 26,140.75. From the 30-Sensex firms, Maruti, Power Grid, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, HDFC Bank, Asian Paints and Tata Steel were among the biggest laggards. However, Titan, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers. “Indian equity markets ended today’s session on a subdued and cautious note, with investors adopting a selective approach amid mixed domestic and global cues. Elevated geopolitical tensions and renewed tariff-related concerns continued to cap risk appetite and deter aggressive positioning,” Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.



EV RETAIL SALES SURGE 16.37 PC TO OVER 22.70 LAKH UNITS IN 2025: FADA

**Diary Times Desk :** Electric vehicle (EV) retail sales surged 16.37 per cent year-on-year to 22,70,107 units in 2025, driven by a 77 per cent jump in electric passenger car sales, according to data released by dealers’ body FADA on Wednesday. The EV makers had recorded a total sale of 19,50,727 units in 2024, the Federation of Automobile Dealers’ Association (FADA) said. Electric car sales rose 77.04 per cent to 1,76,817 units in 2025 from 99,975 units a year earlier, it said, adding that e-commercial vehicle sales during the reporting period increased 54.2 per cent to 15,606 units from 10,123 eCVs retailed a year ago. The electric two-wheeler sales for the year under review stood at 12,79,951 units compared to 1,14,94,16 units in the year-ago period, registering a growth of 11.36 per cent. Similarly, the e-three-wheeler retail sales rose 15.39 per cent to 7,97,733 units in 2025 against 6,91,313 units sold in 2024, FADA said. “CY25 clearly reinforces that India’s electrification journey is no longer a pilot; it is scaling, segment by segment. On the strength of robust ground-level adoption, electric two-wheelers retailed around 12.80 lakh retails (+11.36 per cent YoY) with an EV share of 6.3 per cent, while electric passenger vehicles grew sharply to 1,76,817 units (+77.04 per cent YoY), taking EV share to around 4 per cent from 2.4 per cent last year,” said CS Vigneshwar, president, Federation of Indian Automobile Dealers’ Association (FADA).



INDIA'S GDP ESTIMATED TO GROW AT 7.4 PER CENT IN FY26

**Diary Times Desk :** The Indian economy is likely to grow at 7.4 per cent in 2025-26, up from 6.5 per cent in the previous fiscal, mainly on account of better performance of manufacturing and services sectors, as per the government data released on Wednesday. According to the first advance estimates of national income released by Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), manufacturing and construction are estimated to achieve a growth rate of 7 per cent. Buoyant growth in the services sector has been found to be a major driver in the estimated real GVA (gross value added) growth rate of 7.3 per cent in FY 2025-26,” MoSPI said. However, agriculture and allied sector and ‘electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services’ sectors are estimated to witness moderate growth rate in the current fiscal ending March 31. The ministry further said that nominal GDP or GDP at current prices is estimated to grow at 8 per cent during 2025-26. The advance estimates data is used in preparation of the Union Budget, likely to be presented on February 1.





## PIYUSH GOYAL MEETS LIECHTENSTEIN LEADERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC TIES UNDER INDIA-EFTA TEPA

**Diary Times Desk :** Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal met with the top leadership of Liechtenstein on Wednesday to discuss the strengthening of economic ties and the implementation of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA). The visit marks the first time an Indian Cabinet Minister has visited the country, signalling a deepening of bilateral relations following the operationalisation of the landmark trade pact. In a series of posts on X, Goyal emphasised that the partnership aims to boost investment flows, manufacturing growth, and job creation. During his meeting with Brigitte Haas, Prime Minister of Liechtenstein, Goyal focused on combining India's young talent with Liechtenstein's advanced industrial capabilities. "We discussed strengthening economic and investment ties, with a focus on the India-EFTA TEPA to boost investment flows, manufacturing growth & job creation, resulting in mutual prosperity for both our nations. Also, exchanged views on cooperation in skill development, vocational training, and industry-academia linkages, combining India's young talent with Liechtenstein's advanced industrial capabilities," he said.

## INFOSYS AND COGNITION ANNOUNCE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION TO ACCELERATE THE AI VALUE JOURNEY FOR GLOBAL ENTERPRISES

**Diary Times Desk :** Infosys (NSE: INFY) (BSE: INFY) (NYSE: INFY), a global leader in next generation digital services and consulting, and Cognition, the leading AI coding agent company and makers of Devin, the first AI software engineer, today announced a strategic collaboration to scale Devin across global enterprises. The collaboration will deploy Devin across Infosys' internal engineering ecosystem and client engagements worldwide. Infosys Topaz Fabric is a purpose-built agentic services suite - a multi-layer AI fabric that unifies infrastructure, models, data, applications, and workflows into a composable, agent-ready ecosystem. Combining the secure.

## ECONOMISTS SEE INDIA'S GDP GROWTH STRONG IN REAL TERMS, BUT LOW INFLATION NARROWS NOMINAL EXPANSION

**Diary Times Desk :** The National Statistics Office (NSO) on Wednesday released the first advance estimates estimating the Real GDP to grow by 7.4% in the Financial year 2025-26 against the growth rate of 6.5% during FY 2024-25. Real GDP is estimated to attain a level of Rs 201.90 lakh crore in FY26, against the Provisional Estimates (PE) of GDP for FY25 of Rs 187.97 lakh crore, it said. Further, the data said the Nominal GDP is estimated to grow at 8% in FY 2025-26. Speaking on the estimates, Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil said, "The 60 basis point gap between nominal and real GDP this fiscal will be the lowest since 2011-12." "India's growth momentum has sustained despite elevated global uncertainty due to tariff tensions, riding on accommodative monetary and fiscal policies, robust corporate balance sheets, and favourable developments such as above-normal monsoons and low crude oil prices. Fixed investments is the primary driver this fiscal, with growth picking up to 7.8% vs 7.1%. Private consumption growth has held up at 7% -- above the trend but a tad slower than the previous fiscal," he said. "Next fiscal, we expect the nominal and real growth to flip - nominal growth is expected to rise to close to its long-term average at 10.5-11% and real growth to be at 6.7%," he added.



## INDIA'S ECONOMY TO GROW BY 7.4% IN FY26, DRIVEN LARGELY BY SERVICE SECTOR: NSO DATA



**Diary Times Desk :** The Real GDP has been estimated to grow by 7.4% in the Financial year 2025-26 against the growth rate of 6.5% during FY 2024-25, as per the first advance estimates released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) on Wednesday. The Nominal GDP is estimated to grow at 8% in FY 2025-26, it said. Real GDP is estimated to attain a level of Rs 201.90 lakh crore in FY26, against the Provisional Estimates (PE) of GDP for FY25 of Rs 187.97 lakh crore

Nominal GDP is estimated to reach Rs 357.14 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, up from Rs 330.68 lakh crore in FY 2024-25. Further, the Real Gross Value Added (GVA) is estimated at Rs 184.50 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, up from the Provisional Estimates for FY 2024-25 of Rs 171.87 lakh crore, reflecting a 7.3% growth rate. Nominal GVA is estimated to reach Rs 323.48 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, up from Rs 300.22 lakh crore in FY 2024-25, reflecting a 7.7% growth rate. Nominal GDP uses current prices, including inflation, while Real GDP adjusts for inflation using base-year prices, showing true output growth.

The NSO said the growth momentum is being driven largely by the services sector, with real Gross Value Added (GVA) projected to expand by 7.3%. Financial, real estate, and professional services, along with public administration, defence, and other services, are estimated to grow by a robust 9.9% at constant prices during the year. Manufacturing and construction are also expected to support overall growth, with the secondary sector projected to grow by 7.0%, while trade, hotels, transport, communication, and broadcasting services are projected to expand by 7.5%. In contrast, the agriculture and allied sector is estimated to post a more moderate growth of 3.1% On the demand side, private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) is estimated to grow by 7.0%, reflecting steady household spending.

200-YEAR-OLD JUNGAL PALACE GUTTED IN FIRE IN SHIMLA DISTRICT

**Diary Times Desk :** The historic Junga Palace, once the residence of the kings of the erstwhile Keonthal princely state, was gutted in a fire on Wednesday, officials said. However, no loss of life was reported as no one resides in the palace. The fire broke out around 1 pm, which quickly spread across the palace. Local residents who witnessed the blaze immediately informed the Fire Department and also attempted to douse the flames. Around four fire tenders reached the spot, and the fire was brought under control with the assistance of local residents. A team from the district administration also reached the site. The exact cause of the fire and total loss suffered in the incident are being ascertained, officials said.

BBMB SLAMS HIMACHAL GOVT'S 'ARBITRARY' LAND REVENUE ASSESSMENT ON HYDROELECTRIC PROJECTS

**Diary Times Desk :** Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) has formally objected to a recent gazette notification issued by the Himachal Pradesh Government imposing a special assessment of land revenue on major hydroelectric projects, terming the move “ultra-vires, arbitrary, and legally unsustainable”. The objections were submitted to the Land Acquisition Officer and Revenue Officer, Shimla Division, in response to the notification dated December 12, 2025. Under the notification, the Department of Revenue, Government of Himachal Pradesh, assessed annual land revenue amounting to Rs 58.77 crore for Pong Hydro Power Project, Rs 146.92 crore for Beas-Sutlej Link (BSL) Project, and Rs 227.46 crore per annum for Bhakra Dam Project. The cumulative assessment runs into several hundred crores annually. BBMB argued that it is not liable to pay the assessed land revenue, citing historical, statutory, and constitutional grounds. The land on which Bhakra Dam and Hydro Electric Project stands was acquired in 1947 by the erstwhile State of Punjab, well before the formation of Himachal Pradesh. Additional land required for the Bhakra project was lawfully acquired during 1956 and 1958, with full compensation paid to landowners at prevailing market rates. Similarly, land acquisition for the Pong Dam and BSL projects began in 1961 and 1962, respectively.

FRESH SNOW BRINGS CHEER TO TOURISTS IN J-K; IMD PREDICTS COLD WAVE IN PARTS OF PUNJAB, HARYANA, HIMACHAL

**Diary Times Desk :** The IMD on Wednesday predicted cold wave conditions for several parts of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan over the next few days, while the high-altitude areas around Bhaderwah in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed fresh snow. The Punjab government extended the winter holidays in all schools till January 13 in view of the cold weather conditions in the state. A day earlier, several districts in Rajasthan had announced to similarly prolong the winter breaks, and authorities in Uttar Pradesh’s Gautam Buddha Nagar district ordered the closure of all schools up to class 8 till January 10. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said a severe cold day prevailed in isolated places over Rajasthan, and a cold day prevailed over Uttar Pradesh—both states seeing incidences of dense fog. In Kashmir’s Doda district, tourists converged in large numbers at Guldanda (9,555 feet), Panj Nallah (10,200 feet) and Chattargalla (10,500 feet) along the Bhaderwah–Pathankot highway to enjoy the snow-clad alpine landscape. Many tourists described the snowfall as magical and breathtaking, with the experience creating lasting memories, particularly for first-time visitors from different parts of the country.



SC COMES TO RESCUE OF HIMACHAL STUDENT DENIED LAW DEGREE BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

**Diary Times Desk :** In an unusual turn of events, a student from Himachal Pradesh was forced to seek the Supreme Court’s intervention to get her LLB degree after completing the course from Manav Bharti University during 2017-22. Allowing the appeal of Pratima Das, a Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice AG Masih directed the university to issue the marksheets of 5th to 10th semester, the degree and any other relevant documents, if any, to her in four weeks from the date of judgment (January 6, 2026).

Having regard to the above established facts based on records, we are of the view that the Appellant has been deprived of her documents for no fault of hers for a substantial period of time...,” the Bench said. Following an FIR, an investigation by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was launched against MB University on the allegation of sale of fake degrees and the SIT seized the complete records of MB University in 2019.

Since the matter was pending adjudication before the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge, Solan, the students of the University, including appellant Pratima Das, were unable to procure their academic documents.

DHARAMSALA COLLEGE STUDENT’S DEATH: 2 INQUIRY TEAMS BEGIN PARALLEL PROBES

**Diary Times Desk :** Two separate inquiry teams constituted by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Himachal Pradesh Education Department have begun investigations into the death of a young Dalit girl, a student of Government College, Dharamsala, following grave allegations of prolonged ragging and physical, sexual and mental harassment. A five-member UGC committee, headed by Professor Raj Kumar Mittal, UGC Member and former Vice-Chancellor of Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani, initiated its inquiry by interacting with college authorities and students to establish facts surrounding the allegations. Other members of the panel include Professor Sushma Yadav, former UGC member; Dr Neerja Gupta, Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat University, Ahmedabad; Professor P Prakash Babu, Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University; and Dr Sunita Siwach, Joint Secretary, UGC. During its visit, the UGC team held detailed discussions with college Principal Rakesh Pathania and reviewed the functioning of the institution’s anti-ragging mechanism, internal grievance redressal framework, student support systems and campus security arrangements.

### YOUR HOROSCOPE

08-01-2026

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.



PUNJABI SINGER RAMI  
RANDHAWA BOOKED FOR  
DISPLAYING ARMS ON SOCIAL  
MEDIA

**Diary Times Desk :** The Amritsar (Rural) police have registered a case against Punjabi singer Ramandeep Singh, popularly known as Rami Randhawa, for allegedly displaying firearms on his social media account. The police took suo motu cognisance of the post after it came to their notice that the singer had uploaded photographs of arms on Facebook. Following verification of the content, the Ajnala police registered an FIR against him under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and relevant provisions of the Arms Act. ASI Kanwaljit Singh said the police received specific information that Ramandeep Singh had shared objectionable images involving weapons on his social media platform. "On checking his Facebook account, the information was found to be correct. Display of arms on social media is a violation of the law, so a case was registered," he said. The police said further investigation was under way to ascertain the source of the weapons and to verify whether the accused possessed any valid licence for the arms shown in the photographs.

KEY MEMBER OF  
LAWRENCE BISHNOI GANG  
REPATRIATED FROM US;  
HELD AT DELHI AIRPORT

**Diary Times Desk :** A key member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, Aman Bhainswal facing an Interpol Red Notice, was repatriated from the US on Wednesday in an operation coordinated by the CBI, officials said. Wanted by the Haryana Police, Bhainswal is facing charges of offences related to murder, rioting and criminal conspiracy. The CBI obtained an Interpol Red Notice against Bhainswal at the request of the Haryana Police. "The accused is a notorious criminal and key member of an organised criminal gang, namely the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. He was earlier arrested in India and was later granted bail. However, he did not face trial and subsequently absconded," a CBI spokesperson said. Based on the Interpol Red Notice, Bhainswal was traced and geolocated in the US. "He was successfully deported from the USA and arrived in India on January 7, 2026. He was taken into custody by a team of Haryana Police at Delhi Airport," the official said.

PUNJAB LAUNCHES SECOND PHASE OF 'WAR AGAINST DRUGS', FOCUSES ON  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Diary Times Desk :** The Punjab Government launched the second phase of its 'War against Drugs' campaign at Lovely Professional University Phagwara on Wednesday. AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann asserted that the initiative has evolved from a predominantly policing-led crackdown to a broader social movement driven by citizen participation, institutional coordination, and transparent enforcement. The state leadership said the second phase builds on major achievements, including the registration of nearly 30,000 NDPS Act cases, arrest of over 40,000 alleged traffickers, action against over 350 major drug suppliers, freezing of properties worth hundreds of crores belonging to suspected kingpins, and rehabilitation support for nearly 90,000 youths who reportedly returned to mainstream life. Senior police officials reported the recovery of over 250 suspected cross-border drones used for smuggling and continued disruption of narcotics supply chains. CM Mann reiterated that drug addiction is fundamentally a social challenge that cannot be solved through policing alone. The government intends to sustain a non-discriminatory approach to action against traffickers.



PUNJAB BURDENED RETIREES WITH COST OF  
ITS 'SELF-MADE' FINANCIAL CRISIS: HIGH  
COURT

**Diary Times Desk :** The Punjab and Haryana High Court has ruled that Punjab could have curtailed unnecessary expenditure on announcements and wasteful schemes if it was facing a financial crisis, instead of imposing cuts on retired employees. The assertion came as a Bench ruled that the July 29, 2003, circular hiking the pension commutation discount rate from 4.75 per cent to 8 per cent would not apply to the petitioners-employees. Allowing a batch of around 25 writ petitions filed by multiple employees who retired from the services of Punjab government between July 31, 2003, and October 30, 2006, the Bench directed the State to recalculate their commutation benefits under the earlier, more beneficial, table and refund the excess amount by March 31. The controversy arose from a brief period when the State of Punjab changed the pension commutation formula, affecting a section of retired employees. Under the existing pension rules, government employees were permitted to commute a portion of their pension at a discount rate of 4.75 per cent. However, the State by circular dated July 29, 2003, revised the commutation table and increased the rate to 8 per cent for employees retiring on or after July 31, 2003.

CENTRE BROKERS RS 450-CR SOLUTION  
TO HARYANA-RAJASTHAN POLLUTION  
ROW

**Diary Times Desk :** Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday chaired a meeting in New Delhi to address the flow of chemical-laced wastewater from Bhiwadi (Rajasthan) into Dharuhera (Haryana) and the discharge of polluted water from Haryana cities into the Masani barrage. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, Union Ministers Rao Inderjit Singh and Bhupender Yadav also attended the meeting. Rao Inderjit said polluted industrial water from Bhiwadi was continuously entering Haryana. "A breaker built by Haryana was broken overnight. Chemical-laced water has been accumulating in Dharuhera for the past 10 days, posing a threat to residents. The flow of polluted water from Rajasthan to Haryana is not acceptable," he said. It was decided in the meeting to construct a 6-km drain along the Delhi-Jaipur National Highway to channel rainwater from Bhiwadi during monsoon. The cost will be shared equally by Haryana and Rajasthan, with the remaining amount borne by the Ministry of Road Transport. Haryana will also create a mechanism to check wastewater flow into Masani barrage. The total cost of the two projects is estimated.

HARYANA: CASTE CALCULUS IN FOCUS AS BJP PREPARES FOR RAJYA SABHA  
POLLS



**Diary Times Desk :** With two Rajya Sabha seats from Haryana falling vacant on April 9, the ruling BJP has begun exploring caste and community combinations ahead of the elections, which are likely to be held in March. As per the legislative arithmetic, both the BJP and the Opposition Congress are expected to secure one seat each, with 31 MLAs required to win an election. The BJP has 48 legislators of its own besides the support of three Independents, while the Congress has 37 MLAs. The INLD has two MLAs in the 90-member Assembly. The two seats are being vacated following the retirement of Kiran Chaudhry and Ram Chander Jangra. At present, the BJP holds all five Rajya Sabha seats from Haryana. While Chaudhry belongs to the Jat community, Jangra represents the OBCs. The other BJP MPs are Rekha Sharma, Kartikeya Sharma (a BJP-supported Independent from the Brahmin community) and Subhash Barala (Jat). Among the Jat probables, party insiders told 'The Tribune' that former minister and ex-state BJP chief OP Dhankar and former minister JP Dalal are in contention. Chaudhry, too, is making efforts to secure a full six-year term, having got less than two years in the Upper House. From the Brahmin community, state BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli and party veteran Ram Bilas Sharma are in the race, even though the community is already represented by two MPs in the Rajya Sabha.

Drones have already revolutionized warfare. They're about to do it again

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

It's probably just the beginning.

The evolution of drones

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

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

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



Australia's About To Find Out

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

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



Hilary Whiteman

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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INFA

A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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

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



Helen Regan

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

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

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

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

In the heartland of the country's ethnic Tamil minority, a bloody and brutal history is re-emerging from the soil.

But it is difficult to bury the past entirely.

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

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

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

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

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

A blue school bag

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





BEST ART EXHIBITIONS IN LATE 2025: EUROPE

**Diary Times Desk :** ‘Quel désir d’extravagance!’ declared André Breton on seeing Leonora Carrington’s paintings for the first time in 1937. At just 20 years of age, the British-born Carrington understood the tenets of Surrealism well enough to create macabre dreamscapes that unsettle the mind. Carrington’s paintings are populated with occult imagery, powerful beasts and pale, emaciated figures.

This exhibition at the Palazzo Reale in Milan is the first comprehensive survey of Carrington’s career ever to be shown in Italy. Carrington used Surrealism and motifs from Mexican folklore to explore what it meant to be female in the 20th century. The exhibition features paintings, photographs, writings and ephemera that make connections between magic, the imagination, motherhood and madness, resulting in a rich psychological narrative.

In 1874, a precocious 18-year-old art student named John Singer Sargent arrived in Paris. Within a decade, he had enrolled at the city’s Ecole des Beaux-Arts, exhibited at the Salon and risen to become a celebrated portraitist known for his dazzling technical abilities — before it all came crashing down when he unveiled his Portrait of Madame X. The scandalous depiction of the socialite Virginie Gautreau, with her snow-white skin and plunging neckline, was met with such hostility that a bruised Sargent left for London and even contemplated abandoning painting altogether. The work now resides in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it’s considered the gallery’s equivalent of the Mona Lisa. It was the linchpin of the Met’s recent exhibition Sargent and Paris, which now travels to France, where, surprisingly, the artist has been largely forgotten. It will be the first time that Portrait of Madame X has been on view in Paris since its 1884 debut. It’s joined by more than 90 other works that tell the fascinating story of the 10 career-defining years Sargent spent in the cosmopolitan capital. Among them are the important loans Dr Pozzi at Home from LA’s Hammer Museum; The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit from the MFA Boston; In the Luxembourg Gardens from the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and Setting Out to Fish from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. The Museum Langmatt in Baden, Switzerland, was once home to the Swiss couple Jenny and Sidney Brown, who used their fortune made in electrical engineering to build up a stunning collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artworks. Their passion for paintings with a focus on colour and light began on their honeymoon in France in 1896, when they discovered the landscapes of Eugène Boudin. Before long, they were acquiring paintings by Pierre Bonnard, Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro.



A VERY RARE, NEWLY DISCOVERED MICHELANGELO STUDY FOR THE SISTINE CHAPEL CEILING

**Diary Times Desk :**

Michelangelo Buonarroti was born in 1475 in Caprese, southeast of Florence, to an impoverished Florentine family of minor nobility. In the sixteenth century, when longevity was exceptional, he lived to eighty-eight, dying in Rome in 1564 as an extremely famous and wealthy man.

Throughout his life, Michelangelo drew constantly. It was through drawing that he planned and prepared his projects, developed his inventions, and refined his ideas.

Unfortunately, the surviving sheets by his hand, numbering roughly six hundred, total only a fraction of the thousands of drawings he must have produced.

Very rarely new drawings have been rediscovered and added to Michelangelo’s graphic corpus over the decades. Almost all of Michelangelo’s known studies, excluding architectural drawings and the sketches of marble blocks Michelangelo used to send to his quarry masters, are now in public collections. Only about ten sheets, including this newly discovered drawing, are in private hands. Furthermore, no recorded study for the Sistine Chapel has ever come to auction — until now.

In the two decades between 1500 and 1520 Michelangelo was in his physical and artistic prime. At that time, he lived and worked between Florence and Rome, undertaking several of the most prestigious and monumental projects of his career, including a commission from Rome by Pope Julius II della Rovere to paint the enormous vault of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

The enterprise was ambitious, as the surface of the vault measures about 530 square meters (5,700 square feet), yet Michelangelo conceived an elaborate decorative program for it.

He designed a painted illusionistic architectural framework simulating white marble with, at the center of the vault, nine compartments with episodes from the Book of Genesis. Flanking the biblical scenes are twenty ignudi (athletic nude youths) seated on illusionistic plinths next to fictive bronze medallions with episodes from the Book of Maccabees. Below these figures, seven monumental Prophets alternate with five Sibyls, each seated on a throne around the ceiling.



AL HILAL READY TO SPLASH STUNNING €100 MILLION FOR BARCELONA  
SUPERSTAR – REPORT



**Diary Times Desk :** After a week of speculation, Barcelona have finally made a breakthrough in the deal to sign Joao Cancelo, agreeing a loan deal with Al Hilal.

But this is not the only deal Barcelona will be negotiating with the Saudi Arabian giants, who have set their sights firmly on Raphinha.

Al Hilal are desperately looking for a replacement for Neymar and Raphinha has emerged as the ideal option. According to reports relayed by Fichajes, Al Hilal are prepared to offer a whopping €100 million to acquire the services of Raphinha.

The Saudi Arabian giants had presented the idea during the negotiations for Cancelo, with the club ready to offer €80 million in fixed fee and an additional €20 million through performance-linked bonuses. Barcelona are aware that it will be difficult for any other European club to match such an offer right now.

BARCELONA WINGER SET TO START SUPER  
CUP SEMI-FINAL DESPITE RECENT SCARE

**Diary Times Desk :** According to a report from Javier Miguel, it has come to light that Lamine Yamal is certain to be included in Barcelona's starting XI for the Spanish Super Cup semi-final against Athletic Club.

Despite some concerns over his physical condition in recent days, the feeling within the club is increasingly positive regarding his availability.

Notably, a day before the crucial semi-final, it was confirmed that Yamal did not take part in Barcelona's final full training session.

That absence naturally raised doubts, especially given the importance of the fixture and the winger's growing influence in the team. As such, the reason behind his absence was clarified and appears to be far from alarming.

Yamal has been dealing with a stomach virus for several days, which left him feeling weakened and prompted the coaching staff to manage his workload carefully. As a precaution, he was kept out of collective training and instead carried out specific recovery and gym-based work.

BARCELONA VETERAN DEALING WITH  
KNEE PAIN; ISSUE NOT SERIOUS

**Diary Times Desk :** According to journalist Fernando Polo, reporting via Mundo Deportivo, early indications suggest that Marc-Andre ter Stegen's latest injury scare is not considered serious.

The Barcelona captain is currently experiencing pain in his knee, but the initial medical impressions coming out of the club are cautiously optimistic.

Ter Stegen felt discomfort towards the end of Barcelona's training session on Tuesday, just a day before the Spanish Super Cup semi-final against Athletic Club.

As a precautionary measure, the German goalkeeper returned to Barcelona instead of continuing with the squad, in order to undergo further examination.

There, he is expected to be assessed by the same doctor who previously operated on his knee. From Barcelona's perspective, there was no hesitation in allowing Ter Stegen to travel back immediately. The club's priority was to offer the player every possible support, especially given the sensitive nature of knee-related issues and the goalkeeper's medical history.

BARCELONA GOALKEEPER'S  
RECORD IN SAVING PENALTIES  
AHEAD OF SPANISH SUPER  
CUP SEMIFINAL

**Diary Times Desk :** Joan Garcia stole the headlines after his performance in the Catalan derby, and rightfully so given that he single-handedly took FC Barcelona to the win with his stunning display.

Tonight, the Blaugrana take on Athletic Club in the semifinal of the Spanish Super Cup, and there is a good possibility that a completely different skillset of Garcia will be tested.

After all, there is no extra time at the end of 90 minutes, and a draw will directly proceed to a penalty shootout, where Garcia will be up for his first shootout as a Barcelona goalkeeper. So far in his career in the first division, Garcia has stood up against penalties on eight occasions. Of them, he has stopped two and thus has a save percentage of 25%, a number that does not particularly stand out.

Considering how the player taking the penalty has the inherent advantage in a spot-kick, that number is not too bad at all.

Of the eight penalties he has faced, six came during his time at Espanyol, of which he saved two. His saves came last season when he denied Vedat Muriqi of Mallorca and Ez Abde of Real Betis. Playing for Barcelona, the goalkeeper has faced two penalties – against Levante and Real Betis. On both occasions, however, he was beaten, and the opposition went on to celebrate.

INJURED BARCELONA  
VETERAN'S REPLACEMENT  
JOINS SQUAD IN SAUDI AHEAD  
OF SUPER CUP SEMI-FINAL

**Diary Times Desk :** FC Barcelona were dealt a fresh blow on Tuesday when it emerged that captain Marc-Andre ter Stegen had suffered an injury during training.

The 33-year-old goalkeeper had only recently returned from a lengthy spell on the sidelines, but suffered a fresh setback.

Ter Stegen was unable to complete Tuesday's session in Jeddah and, after consulting the medical staff, the club decided that the most prudent course of action was for him to return immediately to Barcelona to undergo tests. Barcelona also confirmed that Diego Kochen would be flying to Jeddah to join the squad as the replacement for the injured Ter Stegen. Now, according to Mundo Deportivo, Kochen has already arrived at Barcelona's team hotel.

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI'S SUPER CUP RECORD GIVES  
BARCELONA MAJOR BOOST VS ATHLETIC CLUB

**Diary Times Desk :** After delivering a composed and efficient performance against Espanyol, where he scored the second goal in Barcelona's 2-0 victory, Robert Lewandowski has put himself firmly in contention to start the Spanish Super Cup semi-final against Athletic Club. The veteran striker looks refreshed, confident, and ready for another decisive night on a stage where he has consistently delivered. Lewandowski arrives at the Super Cup in ideal conditions, as he is benefiting from careful rotation.

That freshness, combined with his experience, makes him a strong candidate to lead the line as Barcelona look to secure a place in the final. Furthermore, his relationship with this competition only strengthens his case. Remarkably, Lewandowski is currently the most prolific scorer in the Spanish Super Cup among all players present in Saudi Arabia. His record in the tournament is outstanding. Across his career, he has featured in six Super Cup matches since his arrival at Barcelona. In those six appearances, he has found the net five times.

