

NEWS IN BRIEF

UP COPS ARREST DOCTOR ACCUSED OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, LOVE JIHAD; COLLEGE RECOMMENDS HIS DISMISSAL

Diary Times Desk : Police on Friday arrested the absconding junior resident doctor of the King George's Medical University who has been accused of sexual exploitation, religious conversion and 'love jihad' by a fellow doctor, while the institute recommended his dismissal. Deputy Commissioner of Police Vishwajeet Shrivastav said the accused was arrested in Lucknow in the evening. His parents were arrested on January 5, he added. The medical university's Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sonia Nityanand, on Friday said the accused junior resident Dr Ramizuddin Naik, alias Ramiz Malik, was suspended on December 22, and barred from entering the campus. "He will not be a part of the university at any cost," she asserted. Her remarks, however, did not quell protests by right-wing organisations as their supporters forced their way into the vice-chancellor's office on Friday and raised slogans, accusing the university administration of being lax in taking action.

THERE ARE YOUTUBE VIDEOS SHOWING STRAY DOG ATTACKS ON CHILDREN, ELDERLY: SC

Diary Times Desk : As a lawyer sought to highlight some videos of violence against canines, the Supreme Court on Friday said there were lots of videos available on online platforms, which showed stray dogs attacking children and the elderly. "There are a number of videos on YouTube where dogs are attacking children and old people. We don't want a competition here..." a special bench of Justice Vikram Nath, Justice Sandeep Mehta and Justice NV Anjaria said after senior counsel Rajshekhhar Rao - representing a dog rights organisation - urged it to watch some videos. Highlighting the increasing number of dog bite incidents across India, the Supreme Court had on Wednesday pulled up municipal authorities for their failure to implement ABC Rules. While hearing pleas filed by dog lovers.

PM MODI NEWS

ON GUJARAT VISIT FROM JAN 10 TO 12, MODI TO ATTEND SOMNATH SWABHIMAN PARV, MEET GERMAN CHANCELLOR



Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a three-day visit to Gujarat from January 10 to 12, during which he will participate in Somnath Swabhiman Parv at the Somnath temple and a Vibrant Gujarat regional conference in Rajkot.

He will also meet German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Ahmedabad on Monday. They will visit Sabarmati Ashram and participate in an international kite festival at the Sabarmati riverfront together.

Modi will arrive in Somnath on January 10. Around 8 pm that day, he will participate in Omkar mantra chanting and thereafter view a drone show at the Somnath temple.

Around 9.45 am on January 11, the Prime Minister will take part in Shaurya Yatra, a ceremonial procession organised to honour those who laid down their lives defending the Somnath temple. The yatra will feature a symbolic procession of 108 horses, reflecting valour and sacrifice. Thereafter, Modi will offer prayers at the Somnath temple around 10.15 am. He will then participate in a public function marking Somnath Swabhiman Parv at 11 am.

According to a statement, the parv is being held to remember the countless citizens of India who have made sacrifices to defend the temple, which continues to inspire the cultural consciousness of future generations. The programme marks 1,000 years since Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion of the Somnath temple in the year 1026. Despite multiple repeated attempts for its destruction over centuries, the Somnath temple stands today as a powerful symbol of resilience, faith and national pride, owing to the collective resolve and efforts to restore it to its ancient glory, the statement said.

BUDGET SESSION OF PARLIAMENT TO BE HELD FROM JANUARY 28 TO APRIL 2

Diary Times Desk : The Budget session of Parliament will be held from January 28 to April 2, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Friday.

The Budget session begins with the address of President Droupadi Murmu to the joint session of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha in the Lok Sabha chamber.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will table the Economic Survey and present the general Budget. However, Rijiju did not share details on the date of the presentation of the Budget. February 1, which has been fixed as the Budget Day, falls on a Sunday this year. Parliament will be in recess from February 13 till March 9.

"On the recommendation of the Govt of India, Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu ji has approved the summoning of both the Houses of Parliament for the Budget Session 2026. "The Session will commence on 28 January 2026 and continue till 2 April 2026," Rijiju said in a post on X.

"The first phase concludes on 13 February 2026, with Parliament reassembling on 9 March 2026, a vital step towards meaningful debate and people-centric governance," Rijiju said.



INACCURATE: INDIA ON US COMMERCE SECRETARY LUTNICK'S REMARKS ON INDIA-US TRADE DEAL



Diary Times Desk : India on Friday described as inaccurate US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick's remarks that the trade deal between the two countries could not be fruitful, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not call up President Donald Trump.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India and the US held a series of negotiations on the deal, and that New Delhi is committed to firming it up.

"We have seen the remarks. India and the US were committed to negotiating a bilateral trade agreement as far back as February 13 last year," he said. Since then, the two sides have held multiple rounds of negotiation to arrive at a balanced and mutually beneficial trade agreement, he said.

"On several occasions, we have been close to a deal. The characterisation of these discussions in the reported remarks is not accurate," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. He was responding to questions on Lutnick's remarks. "We remain interested in a mutually beneficial trade deal between two complementary economies and look forward to concluding it," Jaiswal said.

LAND-FOR-JOB 'SCAM': DELHI COURT ORDERS FRAMING OF CHARGES AGAINST LALU YADAV, OTHERS



Diary Times Desk : A Delhi court on Friday ordered framing of charges against RJD chief and former railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, his family members and others in the alleged land-for-job scam.

Special Judge Vishal Gogne said Yadav used the railway ministry as his personal fiefdom in order to carry out a criminal enterprise where public employment was used as a bargaining chip to acquire land parcels by the Yadav family in connivance with railway officials and his close aides.

The court framed charges in the case against 41 people, and discharged 52, which included railway officials. Earlier, the CBI had submitted a verification report regarding the status of accused people in the case, saying out of the 103 accused named in its charge sheet, five died. The court has posted the matter for formal framing of charges on January 23. The CBI filed charge sheets against Lalu Yadav, his wife and former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi, their son Tejashwi Yadav and others in connection with the alleged scam. It alleged that appointments in the Group-D category of the West Central Zone of the Indian Railways based in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, were made during Lalu Yadav's tenure as the railway minister from 2004 to 2009 in return for land parcels gifted or transferred by the recruits in the names of the RJD supremo's family members or associates.

ZOHRA MAMDANI

INDIA CRITICISES NEW YORK MAYOR MAMDANI FOR WRITING NOTE TO JAILED ACTIVIST UMAR KHALID



Diary Times Desk : India on Friday appeared to disapprove of New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani writing a note to jailed activist Umar Khalid, saying public representatives should respect the independence of the judiciary in other democracies.

Mamdani, who is of Indian-origin, handed over the handwritten note to Khalid when the activist's parents met him in the US last month. In the note, Mamdani conveyed his solidarity with Khalid.

"We expect public representatives to be respectful of the independence of the judiciary in other democracies," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. He was responding to a question on Mamdani's communication to Khalid. "Expressing personal prejudices does not behave those in office. Instead of such comments, it would be better to focus on the responsibilities entrusted to them," Jaiswal said. Khalid has been denied bail since he was arrested by the Delhi Police in September 2020. He was booked under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in a case related to clashes in northeast Delhi in February 2020 between supporters of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

ED LAUNCHES MONEY LAUNDERING INVESTIGATION IN SABARIMALA TEMPLE GOLD LOSS CASE



Diary Times Desk : The Enforcement Directorate on Friday filed a money laundering case in the Sabarimala gold loss case in Kerala, official sources said. The federal probe agency's Kochi zonal office has registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), an ED equivalent of a police FIR, under various Sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. The politically sensitive case is already being investigated by a state special investigation team (SIT) under the supervision of the Kerala High Court. In December, the high court had allowed the ED to undertake an independent investigation into the case after it dismissed objections raised by the SIT against sharing the case information with the central agency. The SIT is probing two cases related to the gold loss incident and has arrested 11 people so far. The latest to be arrested by the SIT was Kandararu Rajeevaru, the chief priest of the Lord Ayyappa temple.



CALCUTTA HC ADJOURNS HEARING OF PETITIONS ON ED RAIDS AT I-PAC SITES TILL JAN 14 DUE TO COURTROOM CHAOS



Diary Times Desk : The Calcutta High Court on Friday adjourned the scheduled hearing of cases related to the Enforcement Directorate's search and seizure operations at political consultancy firm I-PAC's office on account of unmanageable chaos inside the courtroom.

Justice Suvra Ghosh, in whose court the matter was scheduled to be heard, adjourned the hearing till January 14, and left her chair after repeated requests to those not connected with the petitions to leave the courtroom fell on deaf ears. A subsequent official request from the agency before the high court's Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul, praying for an early hearing on Friday itself, was not entertained. The Acting Chief Justice deemed it prudent to not interfere with the judicial order passed by Justice Ghosh. The court was scheduled to hear petitions by ED and the Trinamool Congress in connection with the dramatic developments on Thursday, after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee landed up at the agency's operation venues, and alleged that investigators were trying to seize TMC's sensitive data.

LAND-FOR-JOB 'SCAM': DELHI COURT ORDERS FRAMING OF CHARGES AGAINST LALU YADAV, OTHERS

Diary Times Desk : A Delhi court on Friday ordered framing of charges against RJD chief and former railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, his family members and others in the alleged land-for-job scam. Special Judge Vishal Gogne said Yadav used the railway ministry as his personal fiefdom in order to carry out a criminal enterprise where public employment was used as a bargaining chip to acquire land parcels by the Yadav family in connivance with railway officials and his close aides.

The court framed charges in the case against 41 people, and discharged 52, which included railway officials. Earlier, the CBI had submitted a verification report regarding the status of accused people in the case, saying out of the 103 accused named in its charge sheet, five died.

The court has posted the matter for formal framing of charges on January 23.

BJP 'CONSPIRED' TO OMIT NAMES FROM VOTER LIST, CLAIM ASSAM OPPOSITION PARTIES; CM HIMANTA REJECTS CHARGE

Diary Times Desk : Opposition parties in Assam on Friday approached the police and the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) against the BJP, alleging that it conspired to delete names from the electoral rolls ahead of the assembly polls, a charge rejected by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Sarma maintained that revision of electoral rolls is a regular process to ensure ineligible names are struck off, and eligible voters included through a due procedure. He also made light of the Congress' 'vote chori' allegation here, stating that elections are yet to take place. Assam has registered a 1.35 per cent increase in voters as per the draft electoral rolls, published on 30 December after the Special Revision (SR) was conducted ahead of the Assembly polls. A total of 7,86,841 additions and 4,47,196 deletions have taken place. Five of the opposition parties — the Congress, CPI(M), Rajiwar Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad and the CPI(ML)L — filed a complaint at Dispur Police Station here, claiming that state BJP president Dilip Saikia has specifically entrusted cabinet minister Ashok Singhal to carry out the deletion process in 60 legislative assembly constituencies (LACs).

I-PAC ROW: MAMATA HITS STREETS, LEADS MEGA PROTEST MARCH IN KOLKATA AGAINST ED ACTION



Diary Times Desk : West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday led a massive protest march in south Kolkata against the Enforcement Directorate's searches linked to political consultancy firm I-PAC, as her TMC mounted a show of street strength ahead of the 2026 Assembly election.

Escalating her confrontation with the Centre, Banerjee chose the streets as her political battleground, turning ED action into a rallying point prior to the high-stakes election. As she walked from the 8B Bus Stand area towards Hazra More, the TMC supremo was flanked by senior ministers, MPs, MLAs and party functionaries, with sloganeering crowds accusing the BJP-led Centre of "misusing central agencies for political vendetta".

The mega rally came a day after Banerjee's dramatic appearance at I-PAC chief Pratik Jain's Loudon Street residence during an ED raid, an episode that has since escalated into a full-blown Centre-state confrontation. The march, however, unfolded with a cultural credence unmistakably Bengali.

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NEW POLITICAL TWIST IN AMBERNATH: NOW SHIV SENA-NCP FORM GROUP IN BID TO KEEP BJP AWAY FROM POWER

Diary Times Desk : In yet another twist to the political saga in the Ambernath Municipal Council in Maharashtra, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar-led NCP along with one independent member on Friday formed a group to stake claim to rule the local body by keeping the BJP away from power. A senior local leader of the Shiv Sena confirmed that his party, the NCP and one independent have come together in a bid to occupy power in the municipal council in Ambernath in Thane district. A letter about the formation of this new group has been submitted to the district authorities, he said. The development comes a day after 12 suspended Congress councillors joined the BJP. Both Sena and NCP are allies in the Mahayuti government helmed by the BJP. "This development will upset the BJP's well-manoeuvred plans to gain control of the municipal council following the induction of the suspended Congress councillors," the leader said. An NCP leader also confirmed the development. After the December 20 local polls, the local unit of the BJP joined hands with its arch-rival, Congress, under the banner of 'Ambernath Vikas Aghadi' (AVA) to gain power in the municipal council.

CBI ARRESTS CENTRAL POWER RESEARCH INSTITUTE OFFICIAL IN RS 9.5 LAKH BRIBERY CASE

Diary Times Desk : The CBI on Friday arrested in Bengaluru Central Power Research Institute Joint Director Rajaram Mohanrao Chennu in an alleged bribery case of Rs 9.5 lakh, officials said. During searches at his residence, the CBI seized a large sum of cash worth over Rs 3.59 crore, and foreign currency — including US Dollars, Hong Kong Dollars, Singapore Dollars, Indonesian Rupiah, Malaysian Ringgit, Euros, Yuan (Renminbi), Swedish Krona, and UAE Dirham — worth over Rs 4 lakh, among others. It is alleged that Chennu was indulging in corrupt activities and receiving bribes for issuing favourable test reports in respect of the electrical equipment produced by a private company named Sudhir Group of Companies. The agency also arrested the company director, Atul Khanna, in connection with the bribery case, they said. “After registration of the FIR, the CBI laid a trap and apprehended the joint director of Central Power Research Institute, Bengaluru, along with an executive of the private company while transacting the bribe amount of Rs 9.5 lakh, on 09.01.2026, in Bengaluru,” the CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

GOA GETS FIRST CHARTER FLIGHT FROM POLISH CITY OF KATOWICE IN CURRENT TOURIST SEASON

Diary Times Desk : Goa on Friday received the first charter flight from Katowice city in Poland, with nearly 200 passengers on-board, for the current tourist season, further strengthening the coastal state's air connectivity with Europe. The flight ENT 1443, carrying 189 passengers, landed at Manohar International Airport at Mopa in North Goa at 9.30 am. It was the first charter arrival from Katowice this season and the second such flight from Poland to Goa this year, officials said.

State Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte said the arrival was a positive development for Goa's international tourism sector, noting that Poland continues to be an important source market for holiday-makers. “The charter operations help diversify our international markets while promoting quality tourism. The state remains committed to improving connectivity and positioning Goa as a responsible, year-round global destination,” he noted.

Director of Tourism Kedar Naik emphasised that charter flights play a crucial role in sustaining international tourist inflow into Goa and supporting local stakeholders.

SIT ARRESTS SABARIMALA CHIEF PRIEST KANDARARU RAJEEVARU IN TEMPLE GOLD LOSS CASE



Diary Times Desk : The Special Investigation Team probing the Sabarimala gold loss case on Friday arrested chief priest Kandararu Rajeevaru, citing his close links with prime accused Unnikrishnan Potty and his role in recommending the controversial replating of the Dwarapalaka and Sreekovil gold plates at the Lord Ayyappa temple. Thanthri Rajeevaru, who held a position of supreme religious and ritualistic authority at Lord Ayyappa shrine, was questioned at an undisclosed location in the morning and later shifted to the SIT office in the afternoon, where his arrest was formally recorded, sources said. According to officials, the arrest was made based on statements given by prime accused Unnikrishnan Potty and former Travancore Devaswom Board president A Padmakumar. The SIT found that Rajeevaru had close associations with Potty and had recommended the replating of the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) plates and the Sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) doorframe plates at the temple. Later, when the Travancore Devaswom Board sought his permission.

BUDGET SESSION LIKELY FROM JAN 28; UNION BUDGET TO BE TABLED ON SUNDAY, FEB 1

Diary Times Desk : The Budget session of Parliament is likely to commence on January 28 and the Union Budget is set to be tabled on February 1, a Sunday. Officials, citing the tentative schedule finalised by the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, said on Friday that President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of the two Houses on January 28. The customary address of the President takes place on the first day of the first Parliament session of the year. The two Houses will not meet on January 29 due to the Beating Retreat ceremony. Parliament will sit on January 30 when the Economic Survey is likely to be tabled. On January 31, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha will not meet. The Union Budget is set to be tabled on February 1, a Sunday. After discussions on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address and Union Budget, the Parliament will adjourn for a near month-long recess on February 13. Parliament will reconvene on March 9.

63 NAXALITES, INCLUDING 36 WITH TOTAL BOUNTY OF OVER RS 1.19 CRORE, SURRENDER IN CHHATTISGARH'S DANTEWADA

Diary Times Desk : As many as 63 Naxalites, 36 of them carrying a collective bounty of over Rs 1.19 crore, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Friday, a senior police official said. The cadres, including 18 women, turned themselves in before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials here under 'Poona Margem' (from rehabilitation to social reintegration) initiative, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said. The Naxalites said they were also impressed by the state government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, he said. They were active in south Bastar division, west Bastar division, Maad division in the state, and in areas bordering Odisha, he said. Seven of the cadres carried a reward of Rs 8 lakh each, he said. They have been identified as Paklu, alias Pradip Oyam (45), who was the secretary of the Kalahandi area committee of Maoists; Mohan, alias Azad Kadi (32), a divisional committee member; his wife Sumitra, alias Droupati Chapa (30), Bhairamgarh area committee secretary; Hungi, alias Radhika Lekam (28), platoon party committee member; Sukhran Tati (20), member of Company no. 1; Pandu Madkam (19), member of Company no. 7, and Somdu Kadi (21), who was also a member of the same wing.



BENGALURU DENTAL STUDENT DIES BY SUICIDE; FAMILY ACCUSES COLLEGE OF HARASSMENT

Diary Times Desk : A 23-year-old dental college student was found hanging at her residence here on Friday, police said. She was identified as Yashaswini, a third-year student of oral medicine and radiology. Family members have accused the college management of “harassing” her, claiming the alleged humiliation drove her to take the extreme step. She was the only child of Parimala and Bhudevaiah, the police added. According to her mother, Yashaswini had taken leave on Wednesday due to eye pain. When she returned to college the following day, she was “humiliated” in front of other students for not participating in a seminar. Parimala alleged that a lecturer had prevented her daughter from taking part in the seminar and “harassed” her for not making a presentation. Following the incident, aggrieved students staged a sit-in protest outside the morgue over the death of Yashaswini. Police said a case has been registered and further investigation is underway.

44% INDIAN CITIES FACE CHRONIC AIR POLLUTION, ONLY 4% COVERED UNDER NCAP: REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Nearly 44 per cent Indian cities face chronic air pollution, indicating a structural problem driven by persistent emission sources rather than short-term episodes, an analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has found. However, only 4 per cent of these cities are covered under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), the report said. Using satellite data, CREA assessed PM2.5 levels in 4,041 Indian cities. “Out of 4,041, at least 1,787 cities exceeded the national annual PM2.5 standard every year across five recent years (2019-2024), excluding the COVID-affected year of 2020. This means nearly 44 per cent of Indian cities face chronic air pollution, indicating a structural problem driven by persistent emission sources rather than short-term episodes,” the report said. The PM2.5 assessment for 2025 ranks Byrnihat (Assam), Delhi and Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh) as India's top three most polluted cities with annual concentrations of 100 µg/m³, 96 µg/m³.

**IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER SAYS
PROTESTERS 'RUINING THEIR OWN
STREETS' TO PLEASE TRUMP**

Diary Times Desk : Iran's supreme leader signalled on Friday that security forces would crack down on protesters after they screamed from windows and marched through the streets overnight, directly challenging US President Donald Trump's pledge to support those peacefully demonstrating. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed Trump as having hands "stained with the blood of Iranians" as supporters shouted "Death to America!" in footage aired by Iranian state television.

Protesters are "ruining their own streets to make the president of another country happy," Khamenei said, referring to Trump. There was no immediate response from Washington, though Trump reiterated his pledge to strike Iran if protesters are killed.

Despite Iran's theocracy cutting off the nation from the Internet and international telephone calls, short online videos shared by activists purported to show protesters chanting against Iran's government around bonfires as debris littered the streets in the capital, Tehran, and other areas into Friday morning. Iranian state media alleged "terrorist agents" of the US and Israel set fires and sparked violence. It also said there were "casualties," without elaborating. The full scope of the demonstrations couldn't be immediately determined due to the communications blackout, though it represented yet another escalation in protests that began over Iran's ailing economy and that has morphed into the most significant challenge to the government in several years. The protests have intensified steadily since beginning December 28.

**BANGLADESH CHIEF ADVISOR YUNUS HAS ALIGNED WITH 'RELIGIOUS
EXTREMISTS': WRITER TASLIMA NASRIN**

Diary Times Desk : Bangladeshi-Swedish writer Taslima Nasrin on Friday hit out at the Bangladesh government, alleging that its chief advisor, Muhammad Yunus, has aligned himself with "religious extremists and empowered forces of division" in that country. Speaking on the topic of 'Book for Peace' at the 4th Kerala Legislative Assembly Internationally Book Festival (KLIF), Nasrin also alleged that Yunus, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, was "promoting agendas that threaten secularism and the safety of ordinary citizens." She said that the Nobel Peace Prize does not define peace, power does. And power rarely cares about the truth," Nasrin said. She noted that Henry Kissinger, the 56th US Secretary of State, received the Peace Prize, but "his policies left countries burning and his strategies erased villages." Similarly, Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and former Myanmar Foreign Minister, had not stood with the Rohingyas when they were driven out of the country, Nasrin claimed. "She chose power over humanity," she said. Regarding the situation in her home country, she said that when "certain religious fanatics and extremists" threatened her life.

**US WILL PROVIDE USD 45 MILLION IN AID TO
THAILAND, CAMBODIA IN BID TO ENSURE
REGIONAL STABILITY**

Diary Times Desk : The United States, which played a major role in ending border clashes last year between Thailand and Cambodia, will be providing USD 45 million in aid packages to the two Southeast Asian countries in an effort to ensure regional stability and prosperity, a senior US State Department official said Friday. US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Michael DeSombre made the announcement in an online media briefing in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, where he was meeting with senior Thai officials to discuss the implementation of last October's ceasefire, also known as Kuala Lumpur Peace Accords. Longstanding competing claims to territory along the Thai-Cambodian border was the root cause of the fighting. "The restoration of peace at the Thai-Cambodian border opens new opportunities for the United States to deepen our work with both countries to promote regional stability and advance our interests in a safer, stronger and more prosperous Indo-Pacific," DeSombre said.

**MOSCOW WELCOMES US' DECISION TO
RELEASE TWO RUSSIAN CREW MEMBERS OF
SEIZED TANKER**

Diary Times Desk : Even as the fate of most other crew, including three Indians, remains unclear, Russia on Friday said it welcomed US' decision to release two of its nationals on board an oil tanker seized by the American forces. Russian-flagged Marinera tanker, previously known as Bella 1, was seized on Wednesday by the US Coast Guard in the North Atlantic. It had 17 Ukrainian citizens, six Georgians, three Indian citizens and two Russians. "In response to our request, US President Donald Trump has decided to release two Russian citizens from the crew of the tanker Mariner, previously detained by the US during an operation in the North Atlantic," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in a statement. "We welcome this decision and express our gratitude to the US leadership," Zakharova's statement posted on the ministry's Telegram channel said.

**WINTER STORM SLAMS UK,
FRANCE, DISRUPTING TRAVEL,
LEAVING TENS OF THOUSANDS
WITHOUT POWER**

Diary Times Desk : Thousands of homes and businesses across northern France and southern England were without power Friday morning and residents faced widespread travel delays after a storm swept in off the Atlantic, bringing high winds, rain and snow to the region.

The low-pressure system, named Storm Goretti, pummelled the Isles of Scilly overnight with wind gusts up to 159 kph recorded in the archipelago off the southwestern tip of England. Local government officials reported blocked roads, unstable buildings and power outages that left some people without water.

More than 57,000 were without power across southwestern England, the Midlands and Wales, according to National Grid, which runs the country's electricity transmission network. As the storm moved across the United Kingdom it collided with an existing mass of Arctic air, bringing snow to northern areas and heavy rain to the south.

**MASSIVE ANTI-GOVERNMENT
PROTESTS IN YEARS ERUPT IN
IRAN; MANY FEARED DEAD**

Diary Times Desk : Large crowds of protesters have marched through Tehran and several other Iranian cities in what observers describe as the largest display of opposition to the clerical establishment in years, according to verified video footage.

Peaceful demonstrations were seen on Thursday evening in the capital Tehran and the northeastern city of Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city. Videos verified by BBC Persian showed protesters chanting slogans calling for the overthrow of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the return of Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's last shah, who has urged supporters to take to the streets.

Later that night, internet monitoring group NetBlocks reported a nationwide internet blackout, saying authorities had implemented escalating digital restrictions amid the unrest. Prominent Iranian activist and journalist Masih Alinejad appealed for international support as the protests entered their twelfth day. Writing on social media platform X, Alinejad said the message of the demonstrators was clear, stating that Iranians "do not want this regime." She criticised the internet shutdown and called on tech entrepreneur Elon Musk to help restore connectivity, while also urging US President Donald Trump.

GERMAN CHANCELLOR MERZ ON TWO-DAY VISIT TO INDIA; TO MEET PM MODI IN AHMEDABAD ON JAN 12

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Ahmedabad on Monday. It will be Merz's first official visit to India. Modi and the German chancellor will visit the Sabarmati Ashram and participate in the International Kite Festival at the Sabarmati Riverfront on Monday, which will be followed by bilateral engagements at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar.

The two leaders will review the progress made in the India-Germany Strategic Partnership, which completed 25 years recently. "Their discussion will also focus on further intensifying cooperation in trade and investment, technology, education, skilling and mobility, while also advancing collaboration in important domains of defence and security, science, innovation and research, green and sustainable development, and people-to-people ties," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Prime Minister Modi and Chancellor Merz will also exchange views on issues of regional and global importance, and engage with business and industry leaders of the two countries.



SWITZERLAND HONOURS VICTIMS OF DEADLY ALPINE BAR FIRE IN NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Diary Times Desk : Switzerland will hold a memorial service on Friday, part of a national day of mourning to honour the 40 people who were killed in an Alpine bar fire earlier this month during a New Year's celebration. An additional 116 people were injured, many of them seriously, when the fire broke out less than two hours after midnight at the Le Constellation bar on January 1. Investigators have said they believe sparkling candles atop Champagne bottles ignited the fire in the resort town of Crans-Montana when they came too close to the ceiling. Authorities are looking into whether soundproofing material on the ceiling conformed with regulations and whether the candles were permitted for use in the bar. Fire safety inspections hadn't been carried out.

ANGER, OUTRAGE SPILLS ONTO MINNEAPOLIS STREETS AFTER ICE OFFICER'S FATAL SHOOTING OF RENEE GOOD

Diary Times Desk : As anger and outrage spilled out onto Minneapolis' streets Thursday over the fatal shooting of a woman the day before by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer, a new shooting by federal officers in Oregon left two people wounded and elicited more scrutiny of enforcement operations across the US. Hundreds of people protesting the shooting of Renee Good marched in freezing rain at night down one of Minneapolis' major thoroughfares, chanting "ICE out now" and holding signs saying, "killer ice off our streets." Protesters earlier vented their outrage outside a federal facility that is serving as a hub for the administration's latest immigration crackdown on a major city. The shooting in Portland, Oregon, took place outside a hospital in the afternoon.

'WILL SHOOT FIRST, QUESTION LATER': DENMARK WARNS US AGAINST INVADING GREENLAND

Diary Times Desk : Denmark's defence ministry has issued a stark warning to the US, stating that soldiers will be required to "shoot first and ask questions later" if the country invades Greenland. This comes after US President Donald Trump renewed his push to acquire the Arctic island, citing national security concerns. Denmark's 1952 rule of engagement mandates soldiers to attack invaders without waiting for orders. Meanwhile, Trump has said military force is an option, however, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt emphasized diplomacy is preferred. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also plans to meet Danish and Greenlandic officials next week. Earlier on Tuesday, European leaders warned Trump in a joint statement that the territorial integrity of Greenland and Denmark should be respected. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had also warned the Republican leader and said that any US attack on Greenland would mean the end of the NATO alliance and "the security that has been established since the end of the WWII." Denmark has repeatedly insisted that the island is "not for sale". Trump has argued that the US needs to control the world's largest island to ensure its own security in the face of rising threats from China and Russia in the Arctic.



'HORSEING AROUND': US MAN ENTERS TARGET STORE ON HORSE, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS SHOCKING

Diary Times Desk : A TikTok's quest for viral fame took a messy turn when he rode a horse through a Dallas-area Target store, leaving shoppers and staff in shock. And as if that wasn't enough — the horse went on to defecate the floor prompting an employee to yell, "What are you doing? Get out of the store with a horse!"

The Instagram video has garnered 6 million views so far. The video, shared by Collin Rugg, shows the man, identified as Stephen Harmon, casually riding his horse through the aisles, while a friend tags along. Some shoppers were amused, even stopping to pet the horse, but others were disgusted by the mess left behind.

Social media users had a field day with puns like "horseshit" and "horsing around," but some were appalled by the stunt. "This is disgusting," one user tweeted. "It crapped on the floor," another added. Many wondered why someone would do such a thing for social media attention. "Everything for views these days," a user said. Others joked, "Gotta do whatcha gotta do. I mean who wouldn't want to ride a horse through Target?"

MY OWN MORALITY CAN STOP ME, I DON'T NEED INTERNATIONAL LAW: TRUMP

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump, in an interview to 'The New York Times' brushed aside international law. He spoke about NATO and Greenland, with an emphasis on ownership, while also hinting that China would not take any steps against Taiwan, till Trump was in office.

When asked if there were any limits to his global power, the US President said it is only his mind that can stop him. "Yeah, there is one thing. My own morality. My own mind. It's the only thing that can stop me. I don't need international law," he said, while emphasising, "I'm not looking to hurt people." When pushed further about whether his administration needed to abide by international law, Trump said, "I do." It reported that Trump made clear he would be the arbiter when such constraints applied to the US. "It depends what your definition of international law is," he said. On the issue of China and Taiwan, when asked that Xi Jinping regarded Taiwan as a separatist threat to China, Trump said, "That's up to him, what he's going to be doing. But, you know, I've expressed to him that I would be very unhappy if he did that, and I don't think he'll do that. I hope he doesn't."

US AND GREENLAND: UNDERSTANDING TRUMP'S OBSESSION OVER THE ARCTIC ISLAND

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump's presidency has repeatedly been marked by a strong emphasis on territorial expansion and strategic dominance. Days after a US military operation in Venezuela that led to the capture of its leader, Nicolas Maduro and his wife, attention has now shifted to Greenland, with Trump once again intensifying efforts to bring the Arctic territory under American control.

The renewed push has reignited anxiety across Europe and drawn sharp criticism from several US allies. For decades, Washington has viewed Greenland as strategically important, and the Trump administration has once more placed the island at the centre of its Arctic agenda by reviving discussions around altering the status of the Danish territory. Trump first publicly expressed interest in acquiring Greenland during his first term in 2019, likening a potential deal to a "large real estate purchase." Leaders in Nuuk and Copenhagen, however, rejected the proposal, stressing that Greenland was not for sale or transfer. After returning to office following his victory in the 2024 US Presidential Election, Trump revived his offer from his first-term to purchase Greenland, which was again turned down.



INDIA CALLS TO "EXERCISE RESTRAINT" IN INDO-PACIFIC AFTER CHINA'S MILITARY EXERCISE AROUND TAIWAN

Diary Times Desk : India on Friday urged all parties to "exercise restraint" and resolve disputes through peaceful means following China's recent military exercises around Taiwan. During a weekly press briefing, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that India is closely monitoring developments across the Indo-Pacific region amid China's repeated threats to Taiwan, which Beijing considers an integral part of its territory.

"India closely follows developments across the Indo-Pacific region. We have an abiding interest in peace and stability in the region in view of our significant trade, economic, people-to-people and maritime interests. We urge all concerned parties to exercise restraint, eschew unilateral action and resolve all issues through peaceful means without threat or use of force," Jaiswal said.

"WAR IS BACK IN VOGUE," WARNS POPE LEO XIV, SAYS IT THREATENS PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Diary Times Desk : Pope Leo XIV on Friday warned that War was back in vogue and that this threatens the foundation of peaceful coexistence. The Pontiff was addressing members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. "War is back in vogue and a zeal for war is spreading. The principle established after the Second World War, which prohibited nations from using force to violate the borders of others, has been completely undermined. Peace is no longer sought as a gift and a desirable good in itself. Instead, peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one's own dominion. This gravely threatens the rule of law, which is the foundation of all peaceful civil coexistence," the Pope said. The annual meeting between the Pope and ambassadors accredited to the Holy See is considered one of the most significant moment.

FEDERAL IMMIGRATION OFFICERS SHOOT AND WOUND 2 PEOPLE IN PORTLAND, OREGON, SAY AUTHORITIES



Diary Times Desk : Federal immigration officers shot and wounded two persons in a vehicle outside a hospital in Portland, Oregon, on Thursday, a day after an officer shot and killed a driver in Minnesota, authorities said.

The Department of Homeland Security described the vehicle's passenger as "a Venezuelan illegal alien affiliated with the transnational Tren de Aragua prostitution ring" who had been involved in a recent shooting in Portland.

When agents identified themselves to the occupants during a "targeted vehicle stop" on Thursday afternoon, the driver tried to run them over, the department said in a written statement.

"Fearing for his life and safety, an agent fired a defensive shot," the statement said. "The driver drove off with the passenger, fleeing the scene." There was no immediate independent corroboration of that account or of any gang affiliation of the vehicle's occupants. During prior shootings involving agents involved in President Donald Trump's surge of immigration enforcement in US cities, including Wednesday's shooting by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer in Minneapolis, video evidence cast doubt on the administration's descriptions of what prompted the shootings. Trump and his allies have consistently blamed Tren de Aragua for being at the root of the violence and illicit drug dealing that plague some US cities.

CHINA ACCELERATES CYBERWARFARE AGAINST TAIWAN, BOMBARDING CRITICAL SYSTEMS WITH MILLIONS OF DAILY INTRUSIONS

Diary Times Desk : China has sharply escalated its cyberoffensive against Taiwan, directing an average of 2.63 million attacks every day throughout 2025, according to a new intelligence assessment from Taiwan's National Security Bureau (NSB). The report warns that China is intensifying efforts to infiltrate and disrupt essential civilian and government networks, as reported by The Epoch Times.

According to The Epoch Times, the NSB's study, titled "Analysis on China's Cyber Threats to Taiwan's Critical Infrastructure in 2025," shows that the volume of cyberattacks surged by 113 per cent compared with 2023, when Taipei first began disclosing such data. The barrage increasingly targets systems vital to public life, including electricity supply, emergency medical services, telecommunications, and government operations. The scope and precision of these intrusions suggest China is preparing to cripple Taiwan's internal systems in any future confrontation. Taiwanese officials have linked the activity to five Chinese state-backed hacking units: BlackTech, Flax Typhoon, Mustang Panda, APT41, and UNC3886. These groups have repeatedly infiltrated sectors related to energy, health care, communications, and key high-tech industries.

CHINESE ESPIONAGE PUSH EXPOSED AS TAIWANESE MARINE INDICTED FOR LEAKING MILITARY SECRETS

Diary Times Desk : A former Taiwanese Marine Corps service member has been indicted for allegedly accepting payments from a Chinese handler and leaking classified defence information, a case that prosecutors say highlights China's growing infiltration efforts, as reported by Focus Taiwan. According to Focus Taiwan, the Ciaotou District Prosecutors' Office, Chen, who served as a petty officer second class since 2017, came into contact in early 2024 with a Chinese national using the alias "Jixiang". This online connection soon evolved into a covert recruitment attempt orchestrated from across the strait. Prosecutors said Chen recorded videos between February and March at his home in Kaohsiung's Nanzih District, where he held China's national flag, asserted that Taiwan belongs to China, and pledged allegiance to Beijing. He allegedly received NT\$200,000 in return.

IRAN'S AYATOLLAH KHAMENEI SAYS PROTESTORS WORKING "TO PLEASE AMERICAN PRESIDENT"

Diary Times Desk : Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei accused the US administration of being behind the large-scale protests in Iran. Speaking at a public interaction Khamenei said protestors were acting to please the President of America. "There are also those whose work is destruction. Last night in Tehran, and in some other places, a bunch of vandals came and destroyed a building belonging to their own country. For example, suppose they destroyed a certain building or a wall, just to please the President of America. Because he said... some irrelevant nonsense... that "if the government of Iran does such and such, I will come to the side... I will take your side." The side of these rioters and individuals who are harmful to the country. These people have their hopes pinned on him. If he can, let him manage his own country! In his own country, various incidents are occurring," Khamenei was reported as saying by Iranian state media. The Ayatollah also accused US President Trump of acting like a despot and said that despots are deposed at the peak of their pride. "Our nation does not tolerate mercenaryism for foreigners. Whoever you may be, once you become a mercenary for a foreigner.

IRAN CONSULATE IN HYDERABAD ASSURES SAFETY OF INDIANS, SAYS SITUATION UNDER CONTROL AMID PROTESTS

Diary Times Desk : The Consulate General of Iran in Hyderabad stated that the situation in Iran remains stable and fully under control, asserting that there is no threat to Indian citizens residing in or visiting the country, as per an official release. In a statement, the Consulate General said all necessary measures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all foreign nationals, including Indian citizens. Referring to Article 27 of the Iranian Constitution, the release stated that citizens have the right to freely assemble and protest, adding that the ongoing protests in Iran, driven by economic concerns, constitute a legitimate right as expressed by the Supreme Leader on January 3, 2026, and other state officials. It said protests are essentially a peaceful process, similar to those in other democratic countries, but alleged that some foreign parties are attempting to politicise the protests and turn them violent by "shedding crocodile tears for the Iranian nation" and making purported expressions of sympathy for the Iranian people. In this context, the Consulate General said affiliated media outlets have launched a propaganda campaign by spreading false information.

TRUMP HAD "PRODUCTIVE" CALL WITH COLOMBIAN PREZ: US VICE PRESIDENT VANCE

Diary Times Desk : United States Vice President JD Vance said that the US President Donald Trump had a productive phone call with Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Wednesday (local time).

Addressing a press briefing alongside White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, Vance said that talks are being held at all levels of the government with Caribbean countries.

"Well, look, the President had a very productive phone call with the president of Colombia yesterday and we continued to talk at all levels of government with a number of our friends in the Caribbean region," he said. Vance said that the talks were important to maintain peace. "I actually think this is really good for peace in the Caribbean because when you take away a major source of illegal cartel revenue, which is the cocaine trade, the fentanyl trade, other sources of illicit revenue, you actually remove the power of one of the main destabilizing forces.

TRUMP "CANCELS" SECOND WAVE OF ATTACKS ON VENEZUELA AFTER CARACAS AGREED TO COOPERATE

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump announced on Friday that he has cancelled a previously expected second wave of military attacks on Venezuela, following his military action in Caracas which led to the capture of the South American country's leader Nicolas Maduro and his wife, citing improved cooperation from Caracas and the release of a large number of political prisoners as part of efforts to 'seek peace'. In a post on Truth Social, the US President said that the decision to call off further strikes comes as relations between Washington and Caracas enter a phase of cooperation, particularly on rebuilding and modernising Venezuela's oil and gas infrastructure, which Trump had previously stated following the first wave of attack on Saturday. He described the Venezuelan prisoner releases as a "very important and smart gesture". However, Trump noted that the US military units in the region will remain on alert even though the new round.

RUSSIA LAUNCHED 242 DRONES, 13 BALLISTIC MISSILES, 22 CRUISE MISSILES ON UKRAINE, KILLING FOUR, INJURING DOZENS: ZELENSKY

Diary Times Desk : Russia carried out a massive overnight aerial assault on Ukraine, launching 242 drones, 13 ballistic missiles and 22 cruise missiles, killing at least four people and injuring dozens, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Friday. In a post on X, Zelenskyy said the strikes heavily targeted Kyiv and several other regions in the country, damaging civilian infrastructure and energy facilities during a period of severe cold, as the war continues in Eastern Europe for the last four years. He confirmed that at least four people were killed in the capital alone, including a member of an ambulance crew. "In Kyiv and the region, the aftermath of the massive Russian strike is still being dealt with. All necessary services are deployed. Twenty residential buildings alone were damaged," Zelenskyy said, adding that recovery operations are ongoing in the Lviv region.

INDIA, CHILE IN FINAL STAGES OF SOCIAL SECURITY PACT; CEPA TALKS AT ADVANCED STAGE

Diary Times Desk : India and Chile are in the final stages of negotiating a social security agreement aimed at facilitating investments and the movement of professionals between the two countries, Chilean Ambassador Juan Angulo said on Friday. Speaking to ANI, Angulo said negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which spans more than 20 chapters, have reached an advanced stage, with both sides now working towards fixing dates for the fifth and possibly final round.

"We are also in the final steps of a negotiation of a treaty of social security that will also facilitate investments. Where people, Chileans or Indians working on terms of their social security systems... this will facilitate the increase and dependence of financial and economic trade investment relations between our two countries," Angulo said. Angulo said the two countries are working hard to reach an agreement on the core issues like market access and critical minerals. He said CEPA negotiations are progressing across more than 20 chapters, though some areas are moving faster than others, which he described as normal in comprehensive trade talks. "All CEPAs have more than 20 chapters of negotiation, and we are engaging in all of them. Some chapters are moving faster, while others are taking more time, which is normal in any negotiation process," Angulo said.



NATIONAL TRADERS' WELFARE BOARD REVIEWS MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN RETAIL TRADE SECTOR

Diary Times Desk : The National Traders' Welfare Board (NTWB) on Friday reviewed a range of initiatives aimed at strengthening India's retail trade sector during its 8th meeting held at Vanijya Bhawan, New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by NTWB Chairperson Sunil J. Singhi and attended by representatives of trade associations, States and Union Territories, along with ex-officio members from nine Union Ministries and Departments.

Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Sanjiv, highlighted the critical role of the retail trade sector in the Indian economy and called for greater awareness of NTWB initiatives, including virtual interactive sessions. He noted that the Board's progress reflected effective coordination and a clear strategic vision. During the meeting, Singhi informed members that representations received from trade bodies had been forwarded to the concerned Ministries and Departments for necessary action. He also sought suggestions to improve outreach and awareness of welfare schemes for traders.

"NOT ACCURATE": INDIA AFTER US COMMERCE SECRETARY REMARKS ON TRADE DEAL

Diary Times Desk : The Ministry of External Affairs on Friday said it had been close to a trade deal with the United States on several occasions, and the characterisation by the US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick about it was "not accurate."

"On several occasions, we have been close to a deal. The characterization of these discussions, the reported remarks, is not accurate," MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at the weekly presser. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump have spoken over phone on several occasions over the past year, covering different aspects of wide ranging partnership between India and the US, Jaiswal said. "We have seen the remarks. India and the United States were committed to negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with the US as far.

STOCK MARKETS TAKE DOWNTREND FOR 5TH DAY; SENSEX, NIFTY TANK NEARLY 1 PER CENT

Diary Times Desk : Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the fifth straight session on Friday, falling nearly 1 per cent, as investors turned cautious due to growing concerns over potential US tariff hikes amid lingering geopolitical worries. The relentless foreign capital flight from Indian markets also affected the market sentiment, traders said. After a brief rebound in early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex failed to carry forward the momentum and tumbled 604.72 points, or 0.72 per cent, to sink below the 84,000-level and settle at 83,576.24. During the day, it dropped 778.68 points, or 0.92 per cent, to 83,402.28. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 193.55 points or 0.75 per cent to 25,683.30. From the 30-Sensex firms, NTPC, ICICI Bank, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel, Sun Pharma and Bajaj Finance were among the biggest laggards. However, Asian Paints, HCL Tech, Bharat Electronics and Reliance Industries were among the gainers. On Thursday, the Sensex fell 780.18 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 84,180.96. The Nifty tumbled 263.90 points or 1.01 per cent to 25,876.85.



LIFELINE TO VODAFONE IDEA: ANNUAL PAYOUT CAPPED AT RS 124 CRORE OVER NEXT 6 YEARS

Diary Times Desk : Offering a lifeline to struggling debt-laden telecom operator, the government has capped annual payouts to clear past dues at Rs 124 crore over the next six years, easing near-term cash flows, the company said on Friday. Between March 2032 and March 2035, the yearly outgo will be trimmed to Rs 100 crore, Vodafone Idea said in a stock exchange filing citing a communication received from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). It went on to state that the remaining of the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues shall have to be paid in equal installments annually over six years starting March 2036. The government had on December 31 approved a partial moratorium Vodafone Idea's past dues, freezing them at Rs 87,695 crore that was to be cleared from 2031-32 to 2040-41. This amount, too, will be reassessed by a committee based on an audit. The payment schedule details sent Vodafone Idea shares higher by 9 per cent in morning trade but stock pared most of its gain by afternoon as analysts remained cautious about upcoming funding needs to support its 5G expansion plans. The stock closed at Rs 11.27, down 2 per cent, on the BSE. The relief measures approved by the Union Cabinet on December 31 were aimed at protecting the interest of the government (which has about 48.9 per cent stake in the telco), enable orderly payment of dues to the Centre by way of spectrum auction charges and AGR dues, ensure competition in the sector and safeguard the interests of 20 crore consumers of Vodafone Idea.



SENSEX, NIFTY SLIP IN EARLY TRADE AMID FOREIGN FUND OUTFLOWS, US TARIFF WORRIES

Diary Times Desk : Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty drifted lower in early trade on Friday amid relentless foreign fund outflows and renewed concerns over potential US tariff hikes. After a brief rebound in early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex later declined 78.84 points to 84,102.12.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 21.50 points to 25,850.85. From the 30-Sensex firms, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, NTPC, Adani Ports, Sun Pharma and Trent were among the biggest laggards. However, Eternal, HCL Tech, Bharat Electronics and Asian Paints were among the gainers. On Thursday, the Sensex tanked 780.18 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 84,180.96. The Nifty tumbled 263.90 points or 1.01 per cent to 25,876.85. In the past four days, the BSE benchmark has tanked 1,581.05 points or 1.84 per cent, and the Nifty dropped 451.7 points or 1.71 per cent. Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 3,367.12 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 3,701.17 crore, according to exchange data. "Indian equity markets enter today's session with a cautious undertone following the sharp sell-off in the previous trading day. Risk appetite remains subdued as global trade-related uncertainties continue to weigh on investor sentiment." Persistent concerns over potential US tariff actions linked



INDIA DATA CENTRE CAPACITY MORE THAN DOUBLED TO 387 MW IN 2025, PROJECTED TO TRIPLE BY 2030: REPORT

Diary Times Desk : India's data centre capacity additions more than doubled in 2025, reaching 387 MW IT as the country emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing markets for digital infrastructure. This figure represents a 103 per cent year-on-year increase from the 191 MW IT added in 2024, according to a report by global real estate consultancy Savills India. By 2030, India's total data centre capacity is projected to triple, reaching over 4 GW IT with a compound annual growth rate of 23 per cent.

Market demand also saw a steady rise, with data centre absorption growing 5 per cent annually to 427 MW IT in 2025 from 407 MW IT the previous year. Total operational stock reached 1.5 GW IT by the end of 2025, with 33 per cent of that capacity dedicated to hyperscalers. Facilities serving a mix of hyperscalers and enterprises accounted for 59 per cent of the stock, while enterprise-only stock stood at 8 per cent.

INDIA-EU FTA TALKS ADVANCE AS GOYAL, EU COMMISSIONER STRESS PROTECTION OF FARMERS, MSMEs

Diary Times Desk : Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and European Union Trade and Economic Security Commissioner Maros Sefcovic reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based trading system and a modern economic partnership during high-level talks in Brussels. Discussions centred on the proposed India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), with both sides underlining the importance of protecting the interests of farmers and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), while enabling Indian industries to integrate more deeply into global supply chains.

"In continuation of our efforts to secure a mutually beneficial India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), I held high-level talks with the EU Trade and Economic Security Commissioner, Mr. Maros Sefcovic, in Brussels. During this dialogue, we deliberated across key areas of the proposed agreement. We reaffirmed our commitment.

ENSURE DIGITALISATION AND INNOVATIONS ARE ALIGNED WITH FAIR OUTCOMES FOR CONSUMERS: RBI GOVERNOR

Diary Times Desk : The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor on Friday said our aim should be to ensure that digitalisation and innovations are aligned with fair outcomes for consumers. While speaking at the Third Annual Global Conference of the College of Supervisors in Mumbai, Governor Malhotra said, "For all of us, protecting customers' interest is not just a priority, it has to become the cornerstone of a sustainable and resilient financial system."

He said the digital channels facilitate our efforts by improving inclusion and convenience. "But, without guardrails, they can also facilitate opaque pricing, weak disclosures and inappropriate recovery practices." "A key element of this endeavour should be to protect customers from the menace of rising digital frauds, which has engaged national attention. While banks and other regulated entities individually should continue to improve their tools, techniques and processes in preventing and tackling digital frauds, this is an area where we need to collaborate with each other to build analytics and tools to detect mule accounts and suspicious transactions timely and pre-emptively," Governor Malhotra said. Speaking on the usage of data, he mentioned that the RBI has undertaken several initiatives in the past to streamline the reporting mechanisms and improve the quality of data.



AUTO FINANCE NBFCs TO REGISTER 13 TO 20% AUM GROWTH IN Q3FY26, AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE MAY UNDERSHOOT: REPORT



Diary Times Desk : Asset under management (AUM) growth for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) is expected to remain resilient in the third quarter of FY26, led primarily by strong performance in the auto finance segment, while affordable housing finance may see relatively weaker disbursement trends, highlighted a report by Centrum.

The report stated that following a steady performance in Q2FY26, AUM growth momentum in the auto finance segment is expected to hold up through Q3FY26, with growth estimated in the range of 13-20 per cent. It stated "Disbursements for auto financiers are likely to be stronger sequentially, supported by robust underlying vehicle demand.....In contrast, disbursements in the affordable housing segment are expected to undershoot expectations in Q3FY26". Auto finance is likely to be the key growth driver during the quarter, supported by stronger sequential disbursements and robust underlying vehicle demand. Auto volumes, particularly in passenger vehicles (PVs) and commercial vehicles (CVs), have remained strong during the quarter, coinciding with the onset of a seasonally stronger second half. This is expected to translate into improved disbursement momentum for auto financiers. In contrast, the report noted that disbursements in the affordable housing finance segment are expected to undershoot expectations in Q3FY26. This moderation has been attributed to residual macro challenges, which the report believes are temporary in nature. Despite these near-term pressures, AUM growth in the housing finance segment is still expected to remain resilient on a year-on-year basis. It further highlighted that net interest income (NII) momentum across NBFCs is expected to remain healthy, supported by steady AUM growth and sequential expansion in net interest margins (NIMs). The improvement in margins is likely to be driven by easing cost of funds during the quarter.

HIMACHAL HIGH COURT
CLEARS NEARLY 90% CASES IN
2025 DESPITE SHORTAGE OF
JUDGE

Diary Times Desk : The Himachal Pradesh High Court disposed of nearly 90 per cent of the cases instituted before it in 2025, despite functioning with five judges short of its sanctioned strength. The notable performance followed an intensified judicial push for faster justice, with priority hearings for vulnerable groups and structural reforms aimed at pruning long-pending litigation. Official figures show that the High Court had a pendency of 93,942 cases as on January 1, 2025. During the year, 81,092 fresh cases were filed, while 72,981 cases were disposed of, taking the pendency to 1,02,053 cases by year-end. The case clearance rate stood at 89.99 per cent, even though the court worked with 12 judges against a sanctioned strength of 17, including the Chief Justice. Available information suggests that Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia ensured priority was accorded to cases involving convicts lodged in jails, sexual harassment, crimes against women, juveniles and senior citizens. Matters in which proceedings before subordinate courts had been stayed were also taken up on priority by treating them as "Expedited cases", to prevent prolonged stagnation of trials.

RETIRED SOLDIER DUPED OF
RS 98 LAKH AFTER BEING
KEPT UNDER DIGITAL
ARREST FOR 15 DAYS

Diary Times Desk : A retired soldier of Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh has been duped of Rs 98 lakh after being kept under 15 days "digital arrest" by the fraudsters, officials said on Friday. The victim was intimidated by fraudsters posing as fake CBI, RBI and court officials, claiming his involvement in a money laundering case and even fake fabricated court proceedings, they said. He was placed under "digital arrest" from December 15 to 30, police said. An FIR has been registered at the Cyber Crime Police Station, Central Division, Mandi, in this regard. The cyber police are gathering facts in this case, an official spokesman said. According to the complaint, some unknown people contacted the complainant through phone and video calls, identifying themselves as officials.

13 KILLED, 30 INJURED AS PRIVATE SHIMLA-KUPVI BUS FALLS INTO 500-FOOT-
DEEP GORGE IN HIMACHAL'S SIRMAUR

Diary Times Desk : Tragedy struck the Haripurdhar region of Sirmaur district today when a private bus carrying 40 passengers fell into a 500-foot deep gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmaur district on Friday afternoon, police said. The death toll has now reached 13, as a person undergoing treatment at a hospital succumbed to injuries sustained in the accident, police said. About 30 people sustained injuries in the incident. The accident occurred on a narrow and treacherous stretch of the hill road. Hearing the impact, local residents rushed to the spot and began rescue efforts on their own, negotiating the steep terrain to help victims even before official teams arrived. Police, district administration officials and emergency services were later mobilised, and a coordinated rescue and relief operation is currently under way. Locals on the spot suspect that the bus driver might have lost control of the vehicle, following which it skidded off the road due to frost accumulation.



HIGH COURT ASKS HIMACHAL TO HOLD ELECTION
TO PANCHAYATI RAJ BODIES BEFORE APRIL 30

Diary Times Desk : Rejecting the plea of the state government to defer the elections to Panchayati Raj bodies by six months, Himachal High Court on Friday directed the government to conduct the elections to PRI and urban local bodies before April 30. Disposing of the public interest litigation (PIL) filed by advocate Mandeep Chandel challenging the postponement of polls, a Division bench of the high court, comprising Justice Vivek Thakur and Justice Romesh Verma, also directed the State Election Commission and the state government to complete the entire election process by February 28. Maintaining that the state has suffered extensive damage to public and private properties and roads, the state government had urged the State Election Commission to put the election process on hold till the situation improved on the ground. The government also said that the Disaster Act is in force in the state. However, the high court, after hearing the arguments for three consecutive days, directed the government to hold the elections before April 30, 2026. Advocate Nand Lal, who represented the petitioner, said that the court fixed the deadline after considering that the board examinations will be held in schools in March and setting up polling booths would be impractical, and directed that elections must be completed before April-end.


HIGH COURT DECISION ARBITRARY
WITHOUT LEGAL INTERPRETATION: CM
SUKHU ON PANCHAYAT POLL ORDER

Diary Times Desk : Following court directives on holding of panchayat elections before April 30, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu today said the high court decisions are being given arbitrarily without legal interpretation. Responding to today's high court ruling on holding of the panchayati raj institutions (PRI) polls before April 30, Sukhu said the order will be examined and further course of legal action will be decided accordingly. "I feel when the Disaster Act has been enforced it is a question of legal interpretation. We will go back to the high court to seek interpretation of the Disaster Act, enacted by the Parliament," he said. In light of the high court order, a visibly peeved Sukhu even went to the extent of asking whether the Disaster Management Act, enacted by Parliament, holds any relevance. "The Disaster Management Act has been enforced not in view of the panchayat elections but otherwise. The Act has to be viewed in its entirety, so we will explore this angle," Sukhu said. He said panchayats are still functioning, and if the elections were to be held in December-January, there is snowfall in the higher reaches of districts like Shimla, though in the lower parts of the state, schools remain open.



YOUR HOROSCOPE

10-01-2026



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUNJAB DIG HARCHARAN SINGH BHULLAR MOVES HIGH COURT SEEKING REGULAR BAIL

Diary Times Desk : Punjab DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar, currently confined in the Chandigarh Model Jail, on Friday moved the Punjab Haryana High Court seeking the grant of regular bail. Among other things, he told the court that investigations stood concluded and the final investigation report had already been filed on December 3 last year rendering further custodial interrogation unnecessary. In his petition filed through counsel Nikhil Ghai, Bhullar claimed that the prosecution proposed to examine predominantly then official witnesses and the complainant in the case. The petitioners stood suspended from service, eliminating any plausible apprehension of influencing witnesses or tampering with the evidence. The petitioner also claimed that the complainant in the matter was granted protection as per the High Court orders. The trap, as alleged, pertained to the co-accused. It did not pertain to direct acceptance or recovery from the petitioner. Besides this, the petitioner's production before the magistrate after more than 24 hours of being in custody gave rise to material illegality bearing directly upon the fairness of the process.

ADVOCATES MUST BE TECH-SAVVY TO TACKLE COMMERCIAL LITIGATION & CYBERCRIME: CJI SURYA KANT

Diary Times Desk : Expressing serious concern about cybercrime, which is turning into a global threat, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice Surya Kant said that the nature and scale of crime have drastically changed with technological advancement. The CJI is on a two-day visit to Hisar, which is his home district as he belongs to Petwar village in the district. Addressing the District Bar Association in Hisar today, the CJI said that a dangerous crime known as 'digital arrest' has assumed alarming proportions, of which he himself has taken cognizance, and efforts are being made to curb it. "But as an estimate, cybercrime has led to the loss of nearly Rs 55,000 crore from innocent citizens of the country, with the money being transferred to foreign countries. A massive crime syndicate and international crime racket.

PUNJAB CABINET GIVES NOD TO MEDICAL COLLEGE AT LEHRAGAGGA, DIGITAL OPEN UNIVERSITIES POLICY

Diary Times Desk : Giving a push to strengthen public healthcare, modernise higher education and deliver tangible relief to citizens, the Bhagwant Mann Cabinet today cleared a sweeping set of decisions, including approval to set up a medical college in Lehragagga, Sangrur. The Cabinet, which met here this evening, also cleared a comprehensive Private Digital Open Universities Policy, 2026; extended the Amnesty Policy 2025 for plot allottees; and okayed the rationalisation of GMADA property prices. An official press release said that the government has also accorded consent to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) or its agencies to carry out desiltation in the River Sutlej at sites allotted by the Department of Water Resources at Rs 3 per cubic foot, the same price at which the desilting contract at Siswan Dam was executed. The approval comes with the condition that this price shall be available to NHAI or its contractors/agencies only till June 30, 2026, for providing simple earth to NHAI for construction of the road project between Ludhiana and Ropar.



BITING CHILL IN NORTH INDIA: SIRSA COLDEST IN HARYANA, BATHINDA SHIVERS IN PUNJAB

Diary Times Desk : Severe cold persists in North India and strong winds have escalated the chill. Temperatures dropped below 5 degrees Celsius in parts of Haryana and Punjab on Friday, the Meteorological Department said. Sirsa was the coldest place in Haryana, with a low of 4 degrees Celsius. Narnaul also reeled under intense cold, recording a minimum temperature of 4.5 degrees Celsius, it said. According to the Met, Karnal recorded a minimum of 5.8 degrees, Bhiwani 5 degrees, Hisar 5.1 degrees and Rohtak 6 degrees Celsius. Ambala registered a low of 6.4 degrees, and Faridabad 6.8 degrees Celsius, it added. In Punjab, Bathinda was the coldest place, with the mercury settling at 4.4 degrees Celsius. Gurdaspur recorded a low of 4.8 degrees, Amritsar 6.3 degrees, Ludhiana 6.2 degrees and Faridkot 7.6 degrees Celsius. Patiala registered a minimum temperature of 5.4 degrees Celsius, the weather office said. Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states, recorded a low of 6.1 degrees Celsius, it said. Meanwhile, Delhi recorded its coldest morning of this winter season on Friday, with a biting chill gripping the city as the minimum temperature plunged to its lowest level so far, even as trace rainfall was reported.

KARNAL POLICE CRACK RS 1.75-CRORE LOOT CASE IN 4 DAYS, ARREST FOUR

Diary Times Desk : In a major success, the Karnal police district police have solved a major loot case involving around Rs 1.75 crore within four days, arresting four accused and recovering 1.240 kg of looted gold, Rs 2 lakh in cash and the two-wheeler used in the crime. The breakthrough was achieved by a joint team of CIA-1 led by inspector Sandeep Kumar and CIA-3 led by inspector Ajay. "Acting swiftly and working on all the leads, the team members apprehended all four accused involved in this incident," said DSP Rajiv Kumar while interacting with media persons on Friday in the premises of CIA-1. The accused have been identified as Prince, a resident of Sector 6 of the city, Dinesh of Naiyon Wala Mohalla in the city, Parveen Kumar of Rajpura in Ambala district and Prateek of Sonia Colony in Ambala Cantt, the DSP said, adding that Prince and Dinesh were arrested from Karnal on Thursday, while Parveen Kumar and Prateek were arrested from Ambala. They were produced in the court and were taken on five days police remand. DSP Kumar said the complainant, Baban Govind Mani, filed a complaint that he and his brother-in-law were engaged in gold melting work in the Sarafa Bazar.

AFTER A YEAR, SANYUKT KISAN MORCHA DELEGATION TO MEET APEX COURT- APPOINTED PANEL IN CHANDIGARH TODAY



Diary Times Desk : After remaining suspended for nearly a year, talks between farmers and the Supreme Court-appointed high-powered committee will resume in Chandigarh on Friday. A 15-member delegation of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM, Non-Political) is scheduled to meet the panel. There have been no talks between the protesting farmers and the committee since March 20, 2025, following the eviction of protesters from the Shambhu and Khanauri borders. It was on January 6, 2025 that the committee members held a meeting with farmer leader Jagjit Dallewal, who was then on a hunger strike. The high-powered committee, led by Justice Nawab Singh (retd), was formed to facilitate dialogue, depoliticise the protest, and suggest possible solutions to farmers' grievances. The other members are former Haryana Director General of Police PS Sandhu, agriculture economist Devender Sharma, and Professor of Eminence at GNDU, Amritsar, Ranjit Singh Ghuman. Baldev Raj Kamboj, Vice-Chancellor of CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, is a special invitee. Confirming the development, SKM (Non-Political) leader Kaka Kotda said the delegation would seek clarity on whether any progress had been made towards framing laws or policies ensuring a legal guarantee on MSP and addressing other agricultural concerns.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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.

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.



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.



A NEW COLLECTOR'S GUIDE TO RENAISSANCE BRONZES

Diary Times Desk : From the early 15th century onward, ambitious European makers and patrons of the arts sought to emulate the tastes and technologies of their Greco-Roman forebears.

The revival of bronze statuette production began in Florence in the mid-15th century, soon spreading to Padua, Mantua, Venice and eventually to northern Europe. Replicating the iconography of the ancient civilisations, these pieces were created for quiet contemplation by private collectors, rather than the wider public.

They were designed to be placed on desks and fountains or in cabinets, and intended to be touched, turned and passed between collectors as symbols of taste and power — thus representing a revolutionary break from the Catholic Church's long monopoly over artistic patronage.

Their historical significance and the technical virtuosity of their execution mean that Renaissance bronzes have continued to command interest. These are the nine key things to consider.

Working in bronze afforded sculptors greater freedom. No longer constrained by architectural considerations, they were free to model in the round. Sculptors created wax, terracotta or wooden prototypes that allowed for experimentation, as well as providing something to present to clients.

'A natural talent for modelling was a prerequisite,' says Will Russell, European sculpture specialist at Christie's. 'When the young Flemish sculptor Giambologna (1529-1608) was in Italy, it is said he presented his hero Michelangelo with his latest wax modello. The elderly Michelangelo swiftly crushed the model with one hand, reconstructed an entirely new sculpture from the wax, and told the young artist to practice every day of his life.' Giambologna would go on to be recognised as the greatest sculptor of his day, creating works such as *The Rape of a Sabine Woman* (above), which sold at Christie's for £3,666,500 in 2014. Artists working in bronze typically used the lost-wax technique, a 6,000-year-old tradition employed by the Greeks and the Romans. In the simplest version, an initial modello is created and covered with beeswax, which is then covered in plaster. Once hardened, it is fired, melting the waxy contents. Molten bronze was then poured into the mould and left to cool. After setting, the mould would be broken from the bronze, ready to be perfected by hand.

**EXPEDITION, LEGEND, CHARACTER: A SPECIALIST'S VIEW ON THE ART OF THE AMERICAN WEST****Diary Times Desk :**

What are the qualities that define the American West? 'Self-reliance, independence, controlling your own destiny,' says William I. Koch. On 20 and 21 January, Christie's will present *Visions of the West: The William I. Koch Collection Evening and Day Sales*, two landmark sales drawn from the collection of the eponymous industrialist, scientist and winner of the America's Cup. Bringing together masterworks by Frederic Remington, Charles Marion Russell and their contemporaries, the collection reflects the very best of the artists who shaped the visuals — and values — that came to define the culture and mythos of the American West.

Those ideals run through the imagery of Western art that has long captivated many, including Tylee Abbott, Christie's Head of American Art. His professional stewardship of the field is informed by a lifelong personal connection to the West. In the reflections that follow, Abbott considers how Western art has documented these values and carried them forward, shaping American culture and storytelling across generations.

Tylee Abbott: I was born in Philadelphia, but my relationship with the West started early. From the time I was two years old, my brothers and I spent our summers at a dude ranch near Cody, Wyoming. We were immersed in the Western landscape, exposed to cowboys, fully engaged in cowboy play ourselves, and steeped in a place that actively lives its Western identity.

A descendant and namesake of the Western painter William Tylee Ranney, I was also exposed to his imagery of the American frontier at a young age. Through that connection, my family became deeply involved with the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, and I grew up learning by osmosis — through art, through that institution and through the people who shaped this field.

Eventually my parents bought a ranch in Montana, and summers stretched into months working alongside people who might be considered cowboys through and through. The quality of character in those places was formative. It shaped who we became. That value system — hard work, responsibility, loyalty, self-reliance — is what I find so compelling about the American West. These images have documented those values and distributed them throughout our culture for centuries.



FLICK NOT CONSIDERING CHANGING KEY BARCELONA STAR’S POSITION AFTER JOAO CANCELO SIGNING



Diary Times Desk : Barcelona are ever so close to finalising the return of Joao Cancelo to the club, and while it is not official yet, both the manager Hansi Flick and Deco have spoken about it openly – all but admitting its completion. Despite the club initially looking for a centre-back in the winter, they eventually settled for Cancelo, given the player’s desperate desire to return to the club and his willingness to reduce his salary. Most importantly, the manager saw good utility for him in the team to reinforce the full-back position and thereby free some other profiles to utilise as centre-backs. Arriving as a natural right-back, the first question that pops up is whether Flick is considering using Jules Kounde as a centre-back alongside Pau Cubarsi now that Cancelo can cover at right-back. After all, even Eric Garcia has slowly transitioned to midfield.

As relayed by SPORT, however, that is now an option Flick is considering at the moment. The German coach has never really seen Kounde as a central defender in his scheme, and he does not plan to change that dynamic now.

INJURED BARCELONA DUO WILL TRAVEL TO SAUDI ARABIA TO SUPPORT TEAM IN SUPER CUP FINAL VS REAL MADRID

Diary Times Desk : Playing Real Madrid in a final is always special for Barcelona, for it hands them the opportunity to not only celebrate an El Clasico win but to do so with silverware in their hand. Last season, they played against Real Madrid in the final of both the Spanish Super Cup and the Copa del Rey, winning on both occasions and taking home the bragging rights.

This time around, they once again lock horns with the men in white later this week in the final of the Spanish Super Cup, and the only objective on the dressing room’s mind will be to replicate the same success. As relayed by Mundo Deportivo in a recent update, Barcelona’s injured players are also making their way to Saudi Arabia to cheer their teammates on in the final later this week and potentially celebrate the win. Gavi and Andreas Christensen, the team’s two injured stars who are unavailable for selection, are in Barcelona progressing with their respective recoveries. They will, however, fly to Jeddah for the final. Marc-Andre Ter Stegen had returned to Barcelona after suffering a setback in his knee. But with his concern dismissed as nothing major, he has already joined the squad back in Saudi Arabia and will be present for the final.

HANSI FLICK’S TRICKIEST SELECTION DILEMMA AHEAD OF SUPER CUP FINAL VS REAL MADRID

Diary Times Desk : As Barcelona prepare for the Spanish Super Cup final against Real Madrid, Hansi Flick is dealing with one of his most delicate decisions.

According to a recent report from AS, the manager is facing a genuine selection dilemma in one crucial position that is as crucial as any attacking position. The issue lies in the attacking midfield role, where Flick must choose between Dani Olmo and Fermin Lopez.

Both players arrive at the final in strong form and good physical condition, making the decision far from straightforward. On one side stands Fermin Lopez, a player who has made a huge leap this season. The young midfielder has already scored eight goals, matching his total from last season, while also adding eight assists.

His strength lies in his timing, his runs into the box, and his ability to arrive in goal-scoring positions from deep. In big matches, his energy and direct approach can unsettle even the most organised defences. On the other side is Dani Olmo, a footballer Flick rates extremely highly.

BARCELONA MOVE IMMINENT JANUARY SIGNING’S MEDICAL TO SATURDAY – REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona are just one step away from completing one of their most important operations of the winter transfer window.

According to a recent report from SPORT, Joao Cancelo will undergo his medical examination tomorrow morning, marking the final phase before his return to the Blaugrana is made official. After days of negotiations and internal planning, Barça are now finalising the last formalities of the deal.

The Portuguese full-back is expected to report in Barcelona in the morning to complete his medical tests. Once that process is completed, the club will be free to officially announce his signing. Notably, Barcelona president Joan Laporta recently confirmed that the club has secured Cancelo on loan for the second time in his career. Cancelo arrives on a pure loan deal from Al Hilal, with Barcelona only responsible for a proportional part of his salary until the end of the season.



CHELSEA UNLIKELY TO REVISIT INTEREST IN €70 MILLION-RATED BARCELONA MIDFIELDER – ROMANO

Diary Times Desk : Fermin Lopez was a major transfer target for Chelsea during the summer transfer window, with the Blues making great efforts to lure the young midfielder away from FC Barcelona. In the end, however, the La Masia graduate decided to stay put at the club, snubbing the Premier League heavyweights’ overtures.

Barça, for their part, also had no intention of parting ways with the 22-year-old Spaniard, who has become a key player for Hansi Flick. Now, according to Fabrizio Romano on DAZN, while Chelsea admire Fermin Lopez, and have done so for long, an attempt to sign him in the ongoing January window is unlikely.

The Blues are undergoing some changes, having brought in a new manager in Liam Rosenior to replace Enzo Maresca. So, there is a possibility of some transfers taking place at Stamford Bridge in the coming weeks. However, Fermin is not on the agenda for the Premier League giants for now, and they are unlikely to make a transfer of that magnitude this month. Moreover, the possibility of Barcelona opting to part ways with the Spanish international is very much off the table, considering how pivotal he has become to Hansi Flick’s setup. Fermin was one of the stars of the show earlier this week as Barcelona romped home to a 5-0 win over Athletic Club in the Spanish Super Cup semifinal. In 20 matches, he has eight goals and eight assists each across all competitions.

FLICK’S ASTOUNDING RECORD IN FINALS AHEAD OF BARCELONA VS REAL MADRID SUPER CUP SHOWDOWN

Diary Times Desk : Following Real Madrid’s narrow 2-1 win over Atletico Madrid on Sunday, the Spanish Super Cup will once again see two of the traditional powerhouses of the nation’s football take each other on in the final.

Barcelona were the dominant team last season, with Hansi Flick’s side securing a 5-2 victory to help him seal his first-ever silverware as a Barça manager.

However, it was certainly not the first time Flick had dominated his opponent in a final, at least as a football manager. Indeed, Flick holds a tremendous record in finals – one that would even have Real Madrid be traumatised heading into next week’s final.