

NEWS IN BRIEF

**INDIAN ENVOY
DISMISSES CANADA'S
OLD ALLEGATIONS ON
KILLING OF SIKH
SEPARATIST LEADER
NIJJAR**

Diary Times Desk : Indian High Commissioner Dinesh K. Patnaik has dismissed Canada's old allegations linking New Delhi to the killing of a Sikh separatist leader, asserting that the case is against four individuals and not against the Government of India. In an interview with CBC News on Tuesday, Patnaik also pointed out how the investigation into the Air India bombing has still not yielded anything and not a single person has been convicted of it, despite New Delhi talking about terrorism in Canada for the last 40 years. The remarks by Patnaik, who took charge in September 2025, coincided with British Columbia Premier David Eby's visit to India on a trade mission amid the improving relationship between New Delhi and Ottawa. The ties between India and Canada strained after the then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September 2023 of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing outside a gurdwara.

**1-PAC RAIDS: SC
TO HEAR ON
THURSDAY ED'S
PETITION SEEKING
CBI PROBE INTO
ALLEGED
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Diary Times Desk : The Supreme Court will take up on Thursday the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) petition seeking a CBI probe against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and certain state government officials for allegedly obstructing the agency's raid at the 1-PAC office and premises of its director Pratik Jain in Kolkata on January 8. The ED's petition is listed before a Bench of Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice Vipul M. Pancholi for hearing on January 15. The West Bengal government has already filed a caveat to pre-empt any ex-parte order against it. In its caveat filed in the top court, the TMC Government requested that no decision should be taken without giving it an opportunity to be heard. A caveat, filed before.

**NEET-PG
2025**
**NEET-PG 2025: CUT-OFF MARKS SLASHED TO FILL
VACANT MBBS SEATS; 0 PERCENTILE FOR RESERVED
CATEGORIES; 7TH PERCENTILE FOR GENERAL**


Diary Times Desk : In a move to fill thousands of vacant postgraduate medical seats (MD and MS), the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) has lowered the qualifying percentile for NEET-PG 2025. The decision follows a directive from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) aimed at expanding eligibility for the third round.

The revision brings a significant drop in qualifying standards, with the cut-off for some categories reaching zero. According to the official notice, the reduction to the 0th percentile for SC/ST/OBC candidates means that even those with a negative score of -40 (due to negative marking) are now eligible to participate in the counseling.

The drop in the required percentile is unprecedented across all categories. The Ministry has essentially moved from a "competitive merit" threshold to a "near-zero" threshold to ensure all postgraduate seats are filled. In the general and EWS categories, the percentile has been dropped from the 50th percentile to the 7th percentile. In general PwBD, the percentile has been dropped from the 45th percentile to the 5th percentile.

In the SC/ST/OBC category, the cut-off percentile has been dropped from the 40th percentile to the 0 percentile. The decision was primarily driven by the need to fill approximately 18,000 postgraduate medical seats that remained vacant after the second round of counseling.

This measure seeks to optimize national medical resources and address the acute shortage of specialists without requiring doctors—who have already cleared their MBBS—to reassess their basic competence.

**'ZUBEEN GARG WAS SEVERELY INTOXICATED, HAD DECLINED LIFE
JACKET'**

Diary Times Desk : Popular Indian singer-songwriter Zubeen Garg was "severely intoxicated" and had drowned off Lazarus Island after declining a life jacket last September, a coroner's court in Singapore was told on Wednesday. Garg, 52, was with a yacht party on September 19, 2025, when he died of drowning a day before he was slated to perform at the North East India Festival in Singapore.

The singer initially wore a life jacket but removed it and later declined to put on a second one offered to him, the chief investigating officer told the court in the opening of the inquiry, Channel News Asia reported. At the time, Garg was also severely intoxicated and several witnesses saw him trying to swim back to the yacht when he went limp and began floating with his face in the water, the Channel said quoting the officer. Garg was promptly rescued back to the yacht and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) was administered to him, but he was pronounced dead later that same day. The singer had a medical history of hypertension and epilepsy, with his last known epileptic episode in 2024, the court was told. However, it is unclear if he had taken his regular medicine for epilepsy on the day of the incident, with the evidence of eyewitnesses insufficient to establish that he had actually taken it, it was added. The Singapore police do not suspect any foul play in his death, according to the Channel report. A total of 35 witnesses are slated for the inquiry, including witnesses on the yacht, the boat captain, police officers and paramedics.


**INDIA URGES CITIZENS TO LEAVE IRAN
IMMEDIATELY AMID ESCALATING UNREST AND
VIOLENCE**


Diary Times Desk : India on Wednesday asked its nationals, currently in Iran, to leave the country at the earliest, citing a rapidly evolving security situation amid continuing unrest, and issued a fresh warning against all travels to the Islamic Republic until further notice.

In an advisory issued by the Indian Embassy in Tehran, New Delhi advised Indian nationals—including students, pilgrims, businesspersons and tourists—to depart Iran using all available means of transport, including commercial flights. The advisory follows earlier warnings issued this month and reflects growing concern in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) over the deteriorating internal situation in the country.

"In view of the evolving situation in Iran, Indian nationals who are currently in Iran are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport," the embassy said, reiterating that citizens should exercise extreme caution, avoid areas witnessing protests or demonstrations, remain in close contact with the Indian mission and monitor local media for developments. MEA, in a parallel advisory issued in New Delhi.

**FRAME RULES TO IMPLEMENT 25 PER CENT EWS
QUOTA UNDER RTE ACT: SUPREME COURT**


Diary Times Desk : Maintaining that granting admissions to poor kids in educational institutions "must be a national mission", the Supreme Court has directed government authorities to frame rules to ensure that the 25 per cent reservation in admissions for children from economically and socially weaker sections in private unaided non-minority schools is implemented.

"...we direct the appropriate authorities to prepare and issue, in consultation with NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) and SPCRs (state commissions), as the case may be, as well as the national and state advisory councils, necessary rules and regulations under Section 38 of the RTE Act for implementing the mandate of Section 12(1)(c) of the Act," a bench of Justice PS Narasimha and Justice Atul S Chandurkar said.

The order came on a petition filed by a man whose children were denied admission to a neighbourhood school for free and compulsory elementary education in 2016, despite the availability of seats, following which he moved the Bombay High Court rejected his petition on the ground that he had failed to apply in accordance with the online procedure for filling the reserved seats. The top court said the grant of admission to kids from the EWS category under the Right to Education (RTE) Act was "an obligation of the appropriate government and the local authority."

DAYANIDHI MARAN
**GIRLS IN NORTH TOLD TO
STAY IN KITCHEN, BEAR
CHILDREN, SAYS DAYANIDHI
MARAN; BJP HITS BACK**


Diary Times Desk : Senior DMK leader Dayanidhi Maran on Wednesday said girls in Tamil Nadu were asked to study, whereas their counterparts in the north were asked to stay at home, be in kitchen and bear children, and the remark evoked a strong reaction from the BJP.

Condemning Maran's comment, BJP leader Narayanan Thirupathy accused the DMK of "trying to create regional rifts."

Participating in a function presided by Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin here on Tuesday, Maran said, "everything for everyone" (Ellarukum ellam) is the goal of the Dravidian model government helmed by Chief Minister M K Stalin.

Boys and girls in Tamil Nadu are expected to use the laptop distributed by the government either to face an interview or for their post graduation studies with confidence, the DMK MP said. In Tamil Nadu, we tell women to study. But what is told in the north India? They say girls should not go to work, they should be at home, be in the kitchen, bear children. This is your job. They say like this," Maran said at the laptop distribution event for students here.

**MUMBAI ARTIST ROUBLE NAGI
AMONG FINALISTS FOR \$1M
GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE**


Diary Times Desk : Rouble Nagi, an art and social science teacher based in Mumbai, was named a top 10 finalist for the 1-million-dollar Global Teacher Prize 2026 in London on Wednesday. Nagi works on education in slums and rural communities across India as founder of the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation and Missal India. She is in the running for the annual GEMS Education contest by UK-based Varkey Foundation, organised in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Now in its tenth year, the Global Teacher Prize has received over 1,00,000 applications and nominations from around the globe to honour exceptional teachers making outstanding contributions and spotlight the important role they play in society. "I'm deeply grateful to GEMS Education and the Varkey Foundation for providing this extraordinary platform and championing the voices of teachers," Nagi said. "This gives me the momentum to go further – reaching more children."



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KID RE-ENTRY CAPSULE TRANSMITTED DATA AFTER SEPARATION FROM PSLV-C62: SPANISH START-UP

Diary Times Desk : In a significant development in the failed PSLV-C62 mission, the re-entry capsule KID, carried by the ISRO's rocket "survived and transmitted data," the Spanish start up, Orbital Paradigm, that developed the payload has claimed. However, ISRO did not comment or confirm the company's claim, which was shared in its official account in 'X' on January 13. The Kestrel Initial Technology Demonstrator (KID), weighing 25 kg, was one of the 16 satellites that were onboard PSLV-C62/EOS-NI mission which suffered a failure on January 12 as the rocket could not reach the intended orbit due to "disturbances in the third stage leading to deviation in the flight path", as claimed by ISRO Chairman V Narayanan. "Our KID capsule, against all odds, separated from PSLV-C62, switched on and transmitted data," Orbital Paradigm said. The mission was intended to deploy 15 satellites from the launch vehicle (PSLV-C62) at an altitude of 512 km in the Sun.

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LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON NEWS WEBSITES: EDITORS GUILD TO INDIA, PAKISTAN

Diary Times Desk : Editors Guild of India on Wednesday urged governments of India and Pakistan to lift restrictions on news websites and restore access to cross border journalism. In a statement here, the Guild admitted that there have been instances of media in both the countries crossing bounds of balanced and professional journalism and going overboard with misinformation. "However, while such aberrations and instances of unethical journalism need to be dealt with more conscientiously, blocking all access is not the solution," the Guild said. It said a blanket ban does not expunge ground realities, but only serves to build a climate of fear and mistrust. "Such bans also run counter to the spirit of democracy and freedom of expression," it said. The Guild said it believed that unhindered access to news, especially among the neighbouring countries in South Asia, was an essential prerequisite to building an atmosphere of trust and understanding between the peoples and nations of the region. Untrammelled access to news, views, perspectives, and information will help create an informed citizenry, aid dialogue and help usher in peace in the region.

ZOJI LA PASS DEFIES WINTER CLOSURE, BRO KEEPS SRINAGAR-LEH HIGHWAY TO LADAKH OPEN

Diary Times Desk : Relatively less snow in the mountains so far this winter season has enabled the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to keep the vital land route to Ladakh open for providing all weather connectivity even in peak winters, and also enabling construction of critical bridges in the northern sector. BRO's Project Vijayak based at Kargil has been undertaking relentless snow clearing operations along the Srinagar-Leh national highway, including the strategic Zoji La pass, which remains closed for several months due to heavy snow. Generally, the route is closed to vehicular traffic from December till April. "Mission-aligned and weather-defiant, #BRO's Project VIJAYAK clears winter snow — enabling critical bridge construction in extreme high-altitude terrain," BRO posted on its X handle on January 14 along with a video showing men and machines working in snow bound terrain in Ladakh and an overview of a bridge in a forward area.

INDIA-JAPAN COAST GUARD MEET TO EXPAND COOPERATION

Diary Times Desk : Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) conducted a meeting in New Delhi to review the existing framework of cooperation and discuss avenues for further strengthening operational engagement. This was 22nd such high-level meeting between the two forces. Deliberations focused on enhancing collaboration in Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR), Marine Pollution Response (MPR), Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE) and capacity building. Discussions also covered cooperation in emerging areas, including the use of technology, information sharing, training initiatives, and personnel exchanges. Both sides underscored the importance of sharing best practices, enhancing interoperability and sustaining structured exchanges under the Memorandum of Cooperation between the two Coast Guards. The Japanese delegation will travel to Mumbai, on Jan 16-17 and visit the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited and professional interactions aimed at strengthening maritime industrial and operational linkages. In addition, a Japan Coast Guard National Strike Team (NST) is also visiting Mumbai and will conduct a joint exercise with the ICG pollution response team, focusing on Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) spill response. The exercise will enhance preparedness, operational coordination, and mutual understanding.

I-PAC RAIDS: SC TO HEAR ON THURSDAY ED'S PETITION SEEKING CBI PROBE INTO ALLEGED OBSTRUCTION BY MAMATA



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DELHI COURT CONVICTS KASHMIRI SEPARATIST ASIYA ANDRABI, TWO OTHERS IN UAPA CASE

Diary Times Desk : In a significant development, a special court here on Wednesday convicted Kashmiri separatist Asiya Andrabi and two others for offences including conspiracy to wage war against the country and being members of a terrorist organisation under stringent anti-terror law UAPA. Andrabi, the founder of the all-women separatist group Dukhtaraan-e-Millat (DeM) in 1987, was arrested in April 2018 and charges were framed against her under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for allegedly conspiring to commit terrorist acts, being members of a terrorist organisation, and providing support to such groups. Additional Sessions Judge Chander Jit Singh, as the special National Investigation Agency (NIA) judge, had heard the case against Andrabi and her two associates — Sofi Fehmeeda and Nahida Nasreen. On Wednesday, the special judge found them guilty of offences under UAPA Sections 18 (punishment for conspiracy).

US AMBASSADOR SERGIO GOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT DROUPADI MURMU

Diary Times Desk : US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor on Wednesday formally presented his credentials to President Droupadi Murmu at an official ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan. With this, Gor has assumed charge as the 27th United States Ambassador to India. Following the ceremony, the US Embassy in New Delhi quoted Ambassador Gor as saying that he looked forward to working closely with the Government of India and the Indian people to advance shared priorities in defence, trade, technology and critical minerals. He added that his efforts would focus on further strengthening the partnership between the world's two largest democracies. "It is an honour to serve in India at a time of such promise and opportunity in the US-India relationship," Gor said. Before taking up his posting in New Delhi, Gor served as Assistant to US President Donald Trump and Director of Presidential Personnel at the White House. Earlier this week, after arriving in India, the ambassador described India-US ties as a relationship where "real friends can have disagreements but can resolve them."



TRUMP SAYS ANYTHING LESS THAN
HAVING GREENLAND IN US HANDS
'UNACCEPTABLE'



Diary Times Desk : President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that NATO should help the US acquire Greenland and anything less than American control is unacceptable, hours before Vice President JD Vance was to host Danish and Greenlandic officials for talks.

In a post on his socialmedia site, Trump reiterated his argument that the US "needs Greenland for the purpose of National Security." He added that "NATO should be leading the way for us to get it" and that otherwise Russia or China would — "AND THAT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!" "NATO becomes far more formidable and effective with Greenland in the hands of the UNITED STATES," Trump wrote. "Anything less than that is unacceptable."

Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark, is at the centre of a geopolitical storm as Trump insists he wants to own it — and residents of its capital, Nuuk, say it isn't for sale. The White House hasn't ruled out taking the Arctic island by force. Vance is to meet Denmark's foreign minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen and his Greenlandic counterpart Vivian Motzfeldt in Washington later on Wednesday to discuss Greenland. Along the narrow, snow-covered main street in Nuuk, international journalists and camera crews have been stopping passersby every few metres asking them for their thoughts on a crisis which Denmark's prime minister has warned could potentially trigger the end of NATO. Tuuta Mikaelson, a 22-year-old student, said in Nuuk that she hoped American officials would get the message to "back off."

KEY DETAILS OF GREENLAND'S RICH BUT LARGELY UNTAPPED
MINERAL RESOURCES

Diary Times Desk : The Danish and Greenlandic foreign ministers will meet US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday after President Donald Trump recently stepped up threats to take over Greenland. The autonomous territory of Denmark could be useful for the United States because of its strategic location and rich mineral resources. A 2023 survey showed that 25 of 34 minerals deemed "critical raw materials" by the European Commission were found in Greenland. The extraction of oil and natural gas is banned in Greenland for environmental reasons, while development of its mining sector has been snarled in red tape and opposition from indigenous people. Three of Greenland's biggest deposits are located in the southern province of Gardar. Companies seeking to develop rare-earth mines are Critical Metals Corp, which bought the Tanbreez deposit, Energy Transition Minerals, whose Kuannersuit project is stalled amid legal disputes and Neo Performance Materials. Rare-earth elements are key to permanent magnets used in electric vehicles (EV) and wind turbines. Occurrences of graphite and graphite schist are reported from many localities on the island.



IRAN TO HANG ANTI-REGIME PROTESTER
TODAY; TRUMP WARNS OF 'CONSEQUENCES'
OVER VIOLENCE



Diary Times Desk : Iran is set to witness more brutality as the administration has decided to execute its first protester on Wednesday amid mass arrests of anti-regime protesters, New York Post reported, citing human rights groups. 26-year-old Erfan Soltani is allegedly scheduled to be hanged to death after his arrest during the protests in Karaj last Thursday, the Iran Human Rights (IHR) and National Union for Democracy in Iran (NUFD) NGO groups said. The NUFD reported that the man's "only crime is calling for freedom for Iran." NUFD is also calling for international support to stop Soltani's hanging. He is allegedly unable to seek legal advice to defend himself, as reported by New York Post. The protester is being charged with "waging war against God," a crime punishable by death in Iran. According to the Human Rights Activists News Agency report on Monday, at the end of the seventeenth day, a total of 614 protest gatherings had been recorded nationwide. These demonstrations took place in 187 cities and covered all 31 provinces of the country.

THAILAND CRANE COLLAPSE: 29 KILLED AS
PASSENGER TRAIN FROM BANGKOK DERAILS

Diary Times Desk : A construction crane fell onto a moving passenger train, causing a fiery derailment that killed at least 29 people on Wednesday in northeastern Thailand. Another 64 people were injured, and rescuers were still searching the wreckage and giving first aid. The derailment occurred on part of an ambitious planned high-speed rail project that will eventually connect China with much of Southeast Asia. The crane, which was being used to build an elevated part of the railway, fell as the train was travelling from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani province, according to the public relations office for Nakhon Ratchasima province, where the accident took place. Photos published in Thai media showed plumes of white, then dark smoke above the scene, and construction equipment hanging down from between two concrete support pillars.

INDIAN NATIONALS STRONGLY
ADVISED TO AVOID TRAVEL TO
IRAN UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE:
MEA

Diary Times Desk : The Ministry of External Affairs on Wednesday "strongly advised" Indians to avoid travel to Iran until further notice, amid rising tensions and protests in the Islamic Republic. "In view of the ongoing developments in Iran, Indian nationals are once again strongly advised to avoid travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran until further notice," the MEA said in a statement. The fresh warning follows an earlier advisory issued by the Government of India on January 5, amid mounting concerns about the worsening security situation in Iran. Separately, the Indian Embassy in Tehran has also advised Indian nationals currently in Iran to leave the country at the earliest. "Indian nationals who are currently in Iran (students, pilgrims, business persons and tourists) are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport, including commercial flights," the Embassy said in an advisory on X. "In continuation of the advisory issued by the Government of India on 5 January 2025, and in view of the evolving situation in Iran, Indian nationals who are currently in Iran (students, pilgrims, business persons and tourists) are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport, including commercial flights," it said.

US EXPECTED TO UNVEIL
POST-WAR GAZA
LEADERSHIP, PALESTINIAN
SOURCES SAY

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump is expected on Wednesday to push ahead with his phased plan for Gaza's future by announcing the administration that will run the war-ravaged Palestinian territory, four Palestinian sources said. Israel and Hamas in October signed off on Trump's 20-point plan which says that a technocratic Palestinian body overseen by an international "Board of Peace" is meant to govern Gaza for a transitional period. It is not to include Hamas representation. The 14-member Palestinian body will be headed by Ali Shaath, a former deputy minister in the Western-backed Palestinian Authority who had been in charge of developing industrial zones, the Palestinian sources said. Other members tapped by Nickolay Mladenov, the former UN Middle East envoy who is expected to represent the Board of Peace on the ground, include people from the private sector and NGOs, according a list of the names obtained by Reuters. The first phase of Trump's plan, which included a ceasefire and hostage release deal, has been shaken .

'BETTER BEHAVE': TRUMP WARNS IRAN OF 'CONSEQUENCES' FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST PROTESTERS

Diary Times Desk : As the protests continue to rise in Iran, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned the country of "consequences" if it continues violent actions against its own citizens, saying Tehran "better behave". Trump said that the United States would "review the situation" in regard of reports of killings and alleged executions during unrest in the country.

Speaking to reporters after an event in Detroit, Trump said he was returning to Washington to assess developments related to Iran. "We had a wonderful speech in front of great people in Detroit. I'm going back to the White House now, and we're going to look at the whole situation that's going on in Iran. We'll get some accurate numbers as to what's happening with regard to the killing," the US President told reporters. On being asked if he wants to see democracy in Iran, Trump added that he would want to see a "little bit of freedom" for the Iranian people. "Ideally, we would like to see it. We don't want to see people killed, and we want to see a little bit of freedom for these people. These people have been living in hell for a long time. I have friends who used to invest in Iran, and they did well with their investments. It was a great place. The people were great. Even the leadership was good. And now it is living in hell," he said. When asked by a reporter about Iran's warning of retaliation in the event of US strikes, Trump responded, "Yeah, Iran said that the last time I blew them up with the nuclear capability, which they don't have any longer, so. they better behave."



TRUMP MAKES OBSCENE GESTURE AT FORD WORKER AFTER 'PAEDOPHILE PROTECTOR' SHOUT

Diary Times Desk : US president Donald Trump was caught on camera in a tense confrontation with a Ford Motor Company worker during a visit to a manufacturing plant in Michigan this week, after the worker allegedly shouted "pedophile protector" at him, video circulating online shows. Footage first published by the entertainment website TMZ shows Trump pausing on an elevated walkway as someone in the crowd yells at him from the factory floor. Trump then appears to mouth an expletive and briefly raises his middle finger in the direction of the individual before continuing to wave at other workers. The incident occurred during Trump's tour of the Ford F-150 assembly facility in Dearborn. The White House did not dispute the authenticity of the video.

ARMY CHIEF WARNS PAK AGAINST SENDING DRONES ACROSS LOC

Diary Times Desk : Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday warned Pakistan against sending drones across the Line of Control (LoC). He was addressing a press conference here ahead of Army Day (January 15). He said the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan spoke on Tuesday and the issue of sighting of drones emanating from Pakistan was taken up. There were multiple drone sightings on Tuesday while five drone intrusions were reported on Sunday evening along the J&K border. The Army Chief said these drones were most likely sent for reconnaissance purposes. He said the situation along the disputed boundary with China "remains stable but needs constant vigil". He cited two "turning points" during Operation Sindoor which, he said, turned the tide in favour of India. He said India was looking at creating a dedicated missile.

KEEP PROTESTING, HELP ON WAY, SAYS US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP AS IRAN UNREST TOLL MOUNTS TO 2,000

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump urged Iranians on Tuesday to keep protesting and said help was on the way, without giving details, as Iran's clerical establishment pressed its crackdown against the biggest demonstrations in years that has left 2,000 dead. "Iranian patriots, keep protesting—take over your institutions, help is on its way," Trump said in a post on Truth Social, adding he had cancelled all meetings with Iranian officials until the "senseless killing" of protesters stopped. The unrest, sparked by dire economic conditions, has posed the biggest internal challenge to Iran's rulers for at least three years and has come at a time of intensifying international pressure after Israeli and US strikes last year. An Iranian official told Reuters that around 2,000 people, including civilians and members of the security apparatus, were killed in clashes with security forces. Tehran has described the unrest as the work of "terrorist elements" and foreign-backed groups, rejecting claims of a nationwide uprising. Iranian authorities have accused the US and Israel of fomenting the unrest.



STARLINK OFFERS FREE INTERNET SERVICE IN IRAN AMID PROTEST CRACKDOWN

Diary Times Desk : The satellite internet provider Starlink now offers free service in Iran, activists said on Wednesday. Mehdi Yahyanejad, a Los Angeles-based activist who has helped get the units into Iran, told The Associated Press that the free service had started. Other activists also confirmed in messages online that the service was free. "We can confirm that the free subscription for Starlink terminals is fully functional," Yahyanejad said in a statement. "We tested it using a newly activated Starlink terminal inside Iran." Starlink has been the only way for Iranians to communicate with the outside world since authorities shut down the internet Thursday night as nationwide protests swelled and they began a bloody crackdown against demonstrators. Starlink itself did not immediately acknowledge the decision.

CHINA URGES CANADA TO BREAK FROM US INFLUENCE AS CARNEY VISITS BEIJING

Diary Times Desk : As Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney arrives in China on Wednesday, his hosts see an opportunity to peel the longtime US ally away from their rival, at least a bit. China's state media is calling on the Canadian government to set a foreign policy path independent of the United States — what it calls "strategic autonomy."

Canada has long been one of America's closest allies, geographically and otherwise. But Beijing is hoping that President Donald Trump's economic aggression — and, now, military action — against other countries will erode that longstanding relationship. The government bristled at former US President Joe Biden's efforts to strengthen relations with Europe, Australia, India, Canada and others to confront China. Now it sees an opportunity to try to loosen those ties, though it remains cautious about how far that will go.

Carney, for his part, has focused on trade, describing the trip to China as part of a move to forge new partnerships around the world to end Canada's economic reliance on the American market. Trump has hit Canada with tariffs on its exports to the United States and suggested the vast, resource-rich country could become America's 51st state. The Canadian leader, who took office last year, is seeking to revive a relationship with China that was marked with acrimony for more than six years under his predecessor, Justin Trudeau. The downturn in relations started with the arrest of a Chinese tech executive in late 2018 at America's request.

FOREIGN SECRETARY VIKRAM MISRI MEETS CCP VICE MINISTER SUN HAIYAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT

Diary Times Desk : Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met Vice Minister Sun Haiyan of the International Department of the Communist Party of China on Wednesday. Sharing the details of the meeting in a post on X, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that both sides reviewed the positive momentum in bilateral relations. They also discussed ways to further advance ties by enhancing people-to-people exchanges and addressing concerns on sensitive issues. On January 13, Leaders of China's Communist Party (CCP) met Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosabale at the RSS headquarters. The meeting lasted for approximately half an hour, according to sources. According to the organisation's sources, the meeting was purely a courtesy call, initiated after the CCP delegation expressed its desire to interact with the RSS leadership. No formal agenda was discussed during the interaction, the sources added. The CCP leaders had also visited the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters, where they held a meeting with the party's General Secretary Arun Singh and the party's Foreign Affairs Department Convener Vijay Chauthaiwale. That interaction was also described as part of a 'routine exchange'.



CANADIAN RIGHTS GROUPS URGE PM MARK CARNEY TO RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS DURING CHINA VISIT

Diary Times Desk : Ahead of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's official visit to China, several leading human rights organisations and civil society groups in Canada have urged Ottawa to place human rights on par with trade and diplomatic engagement during talks with Beijing. The visit will be the first by a Canadian prime minister since 2017 and is seen as an effort to reset strained bilateral ties while expanding Canada's economic engagement beyond its reliance on the United States, according to Phayul. Rights groups have warned that renewed economic engagement should not come at the cost of ignoring what they describe as serious human rights violations by Chinese authorities, both within China and against dissidents and minority communities abroad. In a statement issued ahead of Carney's departure, the Tibet Action Institute (TAI) called.

"READY TO WORK HAND-IN-HAND WITH INDIA TO KEEP REGION SECURE," SAYS MALAYSIAN DEFENCE DELEGATION HEAD

Diary Times Desk : India and Malaysia on Wednesday co-chaired the Asian Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus Expert Working Group Meeting on Counter Terrorism. During this meeting, the Malaysian Delegation head, Dato' Muhamma Ammir Bin Haron, said that Malaysia stands ready to work with India to ensure the region remains secure. Speaking to ANI, Dato' Muhamma Ammir Bin Haron said, "We are ready to work hand in hand with India to ensure that our region remains secure." He added, "We have full participation from ADMM-Plus and ASEAN countries, and we hope to move our agenda on counterterrorism forward. We work across the globe to help ensure peace and stability in the region, not against any particular country." In his remarks at the meeting, Dato' Muhamma Ammir Bin Haron said, "Malaysia is privileged to continue serving alongside India.

JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER TOSHIMITSU MOTEGI TO VISIT INDIA



Diary Times Desk : Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi is set to visit India from January 15 to 17, as per the media advisory shared by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). As per the Ministry of External Affairs, Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Toshimitsu Motegi, will arrive in New Delhi on January 15. On January 16, he will meet External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at Hyderabad House. On January 17, he will lay a wreath at Raj Ghat and later visit the Delhi Metro, after which he will emplane from Delhi. The meeting comes after PM Modi and Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi met in Johannesburg earlier this year on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders' Summit in South Africa. The MEA noted in its statement that the two leaders reaffirmed the importance of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, which is based on civilisational connection, shared values, mutual goodwill, and a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The leaders underscored their commitment to deepening the India-Japan partnership for regional and global peace, prosperity and stability. They acknowledged the steady progress made in bilateral ties during the 15th India-Japan Annual Summit and called for expeditious implementation of the outcomes agreed upon in a wide range of areas such as defence and security, trade and investment, SMEs, Artificial Intelligence, critical minerals, semiconductors, infrastructure development, technology and innovation, and people-to-people exchanges.

WATCH AS SNOW 'APOCALYPSE' HITS RUSSIA'S KAMCHATKA PENINSULA, SHATTERS 146-YEAR RECORD

Diary Times Desk : Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula is experiencing one of its harshest winters in recent years, with record-breaking snowfall that's left towns and roads buried under meters of snow. The national weather department confirmed a 146-year-old record has been smashed. The relentless snowfall has brought the city to a standstill, with layers of white covering the landscape. The region, known for its active volcanoes and extreme weather, has received several months' worth of snowfall within days, forcing authorities to issue alerts and increase snow-clearing operations. Images and videos from the region show vehicles almost completely submerged, entrances blocked by towering snowdrifts, and residents digging tunnels just to leave their homes. The snowfall has had a major impact on everyday life, with roads closed, flights delayed or cancelled, and public transport services suspended. Emergency crews are clearing snow from rooftops to prevent structural damage, while residents have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel. Scientists attribute the unusual conditions to repeated cyclonic systems over the Pacific Ocean, which are pulling in large amounts of moisture.

BANGLADESH VOTING CAMPAIGN TO START ON JANUARY 22

Diary Times Desk : In Bangladesh, the upcoming parliamentary general election and public voting campaign is set to start on January 22, an official statement said. Before this campaign begins, security measures have been intensified across Bangladesh, and the army has set up security checkpoints in various locations. Additionally, the police are on special alert, heightened security measures have been implemented in border areas, and on-arrival visas to Bangladesh have been suspended. Earlier in the day, Bangladesh Interim government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus reaffirmed his government's commitment to hold the general elections and the referendum as scheduled on February 12, a statement said on Wednesday. The Chief Adviser made the remarks when two former senior United States diplomats--Albert Gombis and Morse Tan, both of whom served during the Donald Trump administration--called on him at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka on late Tuesday night.

"YOU ARE NOT ALONE," ISRAEL'S ENVOY TO UN AFFIRMS SUPPORT TO PROTESTING IRANIANS



Diary Times Desk : Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon on Wednesday welcomed the decision of the UN to convene an emergency debate of the Security Council amid colossal anti-regime protests in Iran. Danon affirmed his support to the protesters. In a post on X, he said, "After long days of massacre, violent suppression and thousands of killed and wounded, the UN is planning to convene an emergency debate of the Security Council. While the Ayatollahs regime shoots at protesters and hangs opponents, the international community is dragging its feet. To the Iranian people I say, you are not alone! Your struggle for freedom is stronger than any oppressive regime." Meanwhile, Vice-President of the European Commission Kaja Kallas on Wednesday lauded the anti-regime protests led by Iranians. Kallas denounced the use of force against the protesters and threatened to put additional sanctions. In a post on X, she said, "The courage of the Iranian people is humbling. The brutal response by the security forces is unacceptable and exposes a regime afraid of its own people. The EU already has sweeping sanctions in place on Iran. We are now discussing putting additional sanctions."

"OPPORTUNITY THAT BENEFITS BOTH OUR ECONOMIES," GERMAN CHANCELLOR LAUDS PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE TIES WITH INDIA

Diary Times Desk : Federal Chancellor of Germany, Friedrich Merz lauded the cooperation between Germany and India in the form of people-to-people ties. Merz said that around 250,000 people in India are learning German. He said, "Around 250,000 people in India are learning German. There is no place in the world where Germany issues more visas than here in Bangalore. Language, work, and exchange connect people -- an opportunity that benefits both our economies and serves the interests of our countries." Germany is facing a severe shortage of workers, especially in blue collar occupations. India places a high priority on facilitating movement of students, apprentices and workers aiming to take up employment in Germany, collaboration to provide dual vocational training to Indian students as per German standards with the aim of accelerating mobility of skilled workers, and taking other measures to promote fair migration.

INDIA AND GREECE HOLD INAUGURAL JOINT SERVICES STAFF TALKS, DEEPENING DEFENCE COOPERATION

Diary Times Desk : In a significant step towards strengthening bilateral defence ties, India and Greece successfully conducted the inaugural India-Greece Joint Services Staff Talks in New Delhi. The landmark meeting underscored the growing convergence between the two countries in the realm of defence and security cooperation. The talks were co-chaired by senior officials from India's Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) and the Hellenic National Defence General Staff of Greece. Senior representatives from both sides engaged in detailed discussions aimed at expanding the scope and depth of military-to-military cooperation, reflecting the shared strategic outlook of the two nations. In a post on X, the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff said, "The inaugural India-Greece Joint Services Staff Talks were successfully conducted at New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by senior officials."

AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR ROBERT ZISCHG PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT MURMU

Diary Times Desk : President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday received credentials from Robert Zischg the Austrian Ambassdor to India. The President also recieved the credentials of the envoys of Trinidad and Tobago and US at Rashtrapati Bhavan. In a post on X, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said, "President Droupadi Murmu received credentials from Mr Chandradath Singh, High Commissioner of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; Dr Robert Zischg, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria; and Mr Sergio Gor, Ambassador of the United States of America, at Rashtrapati Bhavan."

Speaking on this, Austrain Ambassador Zischg said, "I am honoured to have presented my credentials to the Hon'ble President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu. Austria and India share a longstanding and friendly relationship rooted in strong people-to-people ties and economic cooperation. During my tenure, I look forward to further strengthening Austria-India cooperation and working closely with Indian partners to deepen our bilateral engagement." In a post on X, the Austrian embassy wrote, "Welcome Ambassador Zischg! Today, Ambassador Dr.Robert Zischg presented Letter of Credence, marking the official assumption of his duties. We look forward to further strengthening excellent bilateral relations between our two nations under his leadership."



EARTHQUAKE OF MAGNITUDE 3.8 STRIKES AFGHANISTAN

Diary Times Desk : An earthquake of magnitude 3.8 struck Afghanistan on Wednesday, a statement by the National Center for Seismology (NCS) said. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 90km. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 3.8, On: 14/01/2026 13:19:43 IST, Lat: 36.47 N, Long: 71.16 E, Depth: 90 Km, Location: Afghanistan." Earlier on Tuesday, another earthquake of magnitude 4.1 struck the region at a shallow depth of 10km, making it susceptible to aftershocks. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 4.1, On: 13/01/2026 20:19:01 IST, Lat: 34.74 N, Long: 68.52 E, Depth: 10 Km, Location: Afghanistan." Another earthquake of magnitude 4.0 struck the region on the same day at a depth of 10km. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 4.0, On: 13/01/2026 17:21:19 IST, Lat: 37.34 N, Long: 74.58 E, Depth: 10 Km, Location: Afghanistan." Shallow earthquakes are generally more dangerous than deep earthquakes. This is because the seismic waves from shallow earthquakes travel shorter distances to the surface, resulting in stronger ground shaking, greater structural damage, and potentially higher casualties. Afghanistan frequently experiences earthquakes, particularly in the Hindu Kush region, which lies in a highly active seismic zone, according to the Red Cross. Afghanistan's vulnerability to earthquakes is linked to its location along the collision zone between the Indian.

YOKOHAMA CITY SHINES IN WINTER WITH ACCLAIMED ILLUMINATION ART

Diary Times Desk : Yokohama shows attractive scenery in 4 seasons. Especially in winter Yokohama holds fantastic and dynamic illumination shows "Yorunoyo". It is accelerated by clean and transparent air condition. It was highly evaluated and nominated to be Japan's major night scenery. Takanori Koshida, Yokohama city, "As a city known for night views, Yokohama was nominated as one of Japan's three major night-view destinations. The illuminated Red Brick Warehouse and the historic Sankeien Garden were highly evaluated for this nomination. Yokohama City will focus on further enhancing the charm of its night views". Arisa Koguchi from Yokohama city, "YORUNOYO has begun contributing to the activation of Yokohama's night time economy. High light Yokohama is a 5 minutes spectacle show combining illumination and music. In this year 46 facilities joined."

GOVT UNLIKELY TO ANNOUNCE MAJOR DIRECT TAX CHANGES IN BUDGET 2026: DELOITTE PARTNER SUMEET HEMKAR

Diary Times Desk : The government is unlikely to unveil any major "big ticket" direct tax reforms in the Union Budget for 2026, as the Centre has already implemented the most significant changes through the new Income Tax Act, Deloitte India Partner Sumeet Hemkar said on Wednesday. "I feel the big ticket direct tax reform has already happened, which is in the form of the new Income Tax Act that we have now," Hemkar told ANI in an exclusive interview. "That was the big ticket item which the government has already put into effect." "While some tweaks could be announced in the upcoming budget, they are unlikely to be substantial. We are expecting a few changes to that to happen in the budget of 2026, but not something really material or big," he said, adding that the government is expected to continue pushing the new tax regime. "The new tax regime is likely to continue to receive the impetus from the government," Hemkar said, describing tax certainty and stability as a long-standing policy focus. "Tax certainty and stability are clearly an agenda item that the government has focused.

GROWW REPORTS RS 12,611 MILLION TOTAL INCOME IN Q3 FY26 AMID US-BASED STATE STREET'S RS 5,800 MILLION INVESTMENT

Diary Times Desk : Billionbrains Garage Ventures Limited, the parent company of the investment platform Groww, reported an 18 per cent quarter-on-quarter increase in its consolidated total income for the third quarter of fiscal year 2026, reaching Rs 12,611 million. According to a Groww regulatory filing, the firm's total income rose 26 per cent compared to the same period last year, though profit after tax saw a 28 per cent decline during the quarter. The company attributed the rise in income to a 7.5 per cent growth in active users and increased adoption of new products, including commodity derivatives and margin trading facilities. These new offerings accounted for 49 per cent of the growth in total income during this period. The firm also announced a Rs 5,800 million.

SILVER EXTENDS RECORD RUN TO RS 2.86 LAKH/KG; GOLD HITS FRESH RECORD RS 1.46 LAKH/10G IN DELHI

Diary Times Desk : Silver prices zoomed by Rs 15,000 to a fresh record of Rs 2,86,000 per kg in the national capital on Wednesday, while gold also climbed to touch a lifetime high of Rs 1,46,500 per 10 grams, tracking strong global trends. According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver prices extended their blistering rally for the fourth consecutive day by jumping Rs 15,000, or 5.5 per cent, to touch a new peak of Rs 2,86,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) up from Tuesday's close of Rs 2,71,000 per kg. With the latest rise, the metal had appreciated by Rs 42,500, or 17.45 per cent, over the past four sessions from Rs 2,43,500 per kg on January 8. Traders said silver continued to outperform gold in terms of returns. During the calendar year, the metal has rallied nearly 20 per cent, gaining Rs 47,000 from Rs 2,39,000 per kg recorded on December 31, 2025. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also climbed by Rs 1,500 to scale yet another peak of Rs 1,46,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 1,45,000 per 10 grams in the previous session.



WHOLESALE PRICE INFLATION RISES marginally TO 0.83 PC IN DECEMBER

Diary Times Desk : Wholesale price inflation extended upward momentum for the second straight month, recording at 0.83 per cent in December 2025, driven by an uptick in prices of food, non-food articles, and manufactured items on a month-on-month basis, government data showed on Wednesday. Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation returned to positive in December, after witnessing a deflationary trend in the previous two months. In November and October, the pace of price rise was negative at (-) 0.32 per cent and (-) 1.21 per cent, respectively. In contrast, WPI inflation was 2.57 per cent in December 2024. "Positive rate of inflation in December 2025 is primarily due to an increase in prices of other manufacturing, minerals, manufacture of machinery and equipment, manufacture of food products, and textiles, etc.," the industry ministry said in a statement. According to WPI data, deflation in food articles was 0.43 per cent in December, as against 4.16 per cent in November. In vegetables, deflation was 3.50 per cent in December, compared to 20.23 per cent in November. In the case of manufactured products, WPI inflation inched up to 1.82 per cent, as against 1.33 per cent in November 2025. The non-food articles category showed an inflation of 2.95 per cent in December, against 2.27 per cent in November.



SENSEX, NIFTY EXTEND LOSSES AMID WEAK IT AND BANKING STOCKS

Diary Times Desk : Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Wednesday, extending their previous day's losses, due to weakness in IT, consumption, and select banking blue-chip stocks amid escalating geopolitical tensions. Besides, persistent foreign fund outflows and fresh tariff-related uncertainties also unnerved investors, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 244.98 points, or 0.29 per cent, to settle at 83,382.71. During the day, it fell 442.49 points or 0.52 per cent to 83,185.20. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 66.70 points, or 0.26 per cent, to 25,665.60. From the 30-Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, Maruti, Sun Pharma, Hindustan Unilever, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra, HDFC Bank and Larsen & Toubro were among the biggest laggards. On the other hand, Tata Steel, NTPC, Axis Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the gainers. Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 1,499.81 crore on Tuesday, and Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 1,181.78 crore, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled higher, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index ended lower. Markets in Europe were quoting higher. US markets ended lower on Tuesday. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.99 per cent to USD 64.82 per barrel. On Tuesday, the Sensex dropped 250.48 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at 83,627.69. The Nifty edged lower by 57.95 points or 0.22 per cent to 25,732.30.



RBI GIVES APPROVAL TO JAPAN'S SMBC FOR SETTING UP WHOLLY OWNED SUBSIDIARY IN INDIA

Diary Times Desk : The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted 'in-principle' approval to Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC), Japan for setting up a Wholly Owned Subsidiary (WOS) in India. The approval comes under the Reserve Bank of India (Setting Up of Wholly Owned Subsidiaries by Foreign Banks) Guidelines, 2025. SMBC is currently carrying on banking business in India in branch mode through its four branches located in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru. The 'in-principle' approval has been granted to the bank for setting up a WOS through conversion of its existing branches in India, RBI said in a statement. The RBI would consider granting a licence for commencement of banking business in WOS mode under Section 22 (1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 to SMBC on being satisfied that the bank has complied with the requisite conditions laid down by RBI as part of 'in-principle' approval.

NOMURA PROJECTS INFLATION TO "DRIFT GRADUALLY HIGHER" IN NEW CPI SERIES

Diary Times Desk : India's inflation trajectory is set for a technical shift as a new Consumer Price Index (CPI) series prepares to debut in February, marking the end of the outgoing 2012-based series that closed December with a modest rise. Nomura, in its latest report, expects CPI inflation to "drift gradually higher in the coming months" following the transition to a 2024 base year. This overhaul includes updated weights that prioritise core categories over staple foods and introduces significant methodological upgrades to data collection. According to the Nomura report, December's headline inflation rose to 1.3 per cent year-on-year from 0.7 per cent in November. While this figure fell below consensus expectations, the uptick was driven by easing food price deflation and the fading of favourable base effects. Food and beverages continued to see deflation by 1.8 per cent, though this was an improvement from the 2.8 per cent decline recorded in the previous month. Subdued prices for vegetables, fruits.

INDIAN BANKS' DEPOSITS CROSS RS 253 LAKH CRORE AS OF DEC'25: RBI

Diary Times Desk : India's scheduled banks registered robust growth in deposits and credit by the end of December 2025, reflecting sustained momentum in banking activity, according to the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday. Total deposits of all scheduled banks, excluding inter-bank deposits, rose to Rs 253.77 lakh crore as on December 31, 2025, up from Rs 246.42 lakh crore in mid-December 2025 and Rs 225.22 lakh crore a year earlier. Of this, time deposits accounted for Rs 220.49 lakh crore, while demand deposits stood at Rs 33.28 lakh crore, indicating continued preference for longer-term savings. Bank credit also witnessed a notable increase. Non-food bank credit of all scheduled banks climbed to Rs 208.14 lakh crore as on December 31, 2025, compared with Rs 201.81 lakh crore on December 15, 2025 and Rs 181.95 lakh crore in late December 2024. Loans, cash credits and overdrafts formed the bulk of credit deployment, underscoring steady lending to productive sectors, the RBI data said. Investments by all scheduled banks rose to Rs 70.55 lakh crore, largely driven by holdings in Central and State Government securities, which remained the dominant component of banks' investment portfolios. Liquidity indicators showed mixed trends. Cash in hand with all scheduled banks increased marginally to Rs 85,867 crore, while balances maintained with the RBI declined to Rs 7.27 lakh crore, reflecting changing liquidity management strategies. Meanwhile, borrowings from the RBI rose sharply to Rs 1.69 lakh crore as on December 31, 2025, compared with Rs 26,568 crore in mid-December, indicating higher recourse to central bank facilities during the fortnight.



INDIAAI, NFRA LAUNCH AI-POWERED FINANCIAL REPORTING COMPLIANCE CHALLENGE WITH RS 1.5 CRORE PRIZE POOL



Diary Times Desk : IndiaAI, an independent business division under the Digital India Corporation of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), in collaboration with the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), has launched the IndiaAI Financial Reporting Compliance Challenge to strengthen financial oversight through artificial intelligence. The initiative, part of the IndiaAI Application Development Initiative (IADI), invites Indian startups and companies to develop a scalable AI-based solution for automated verification of financial documents against regulatory frameworks. The challenge aims to bridge compliance gaps by leveraging AI for accurate financial data extraction, validation, and risk analysis. According to the release, participating teams are expected to build AI engines capable of extracting text, tables, hyperlinks, and embedded financial data from both scanned and digital documents. These systems will segment documents into logical sections and validate their completeness, integrity, and regulatory compliance against predefined standards. As part of the competition, up to 10 shortlisted teams will advance to a virtual challenge round and receive Rs 5 lakh each to refine their solutions using sample datasets provided via the AIKosh platform. From these, up to three teams may be selected for a five-day on-premise development round in New Delhi. One winning team stands to secure a work contract worth up to Rs 1 crore to deploy the solution for NFRA over a two-year period. The initiative is positioned as a strategic step toward building scalable regulatory technology infrastructure in India, enhancing transparency, investor protection, and public trust in financial reporting systems. Applications for the challenge are open until February 22, 2026, and interested participants can apply through the AIKosh portal.

ZOJI LA PASS DEFIES WINTER CLOSURE, BRO KEEPS SRINAGAR-LEH HIGHWAY TO LADAKH OPEN

Diary Times Desk : Relatively less snow in the mountains so far this winter season has enabled the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to keep the vital land route to Ladakh open for providing all-weather connectivity even in peak winters, and also enabling construction of critical bridges in the northern sector. BRO's Project Vijayak based at Kargil has been undertaking relentless snow-clearing operations along the Srinagar-Leh national highway, including the strategic Zoji La pass, which remains closed for several months due to heavy snow. Generally, the route is closed to vehicular traffic from December till April. "Mission-aligned and weather-defiant, #BRO's Project VIJAYAK clears winter snow – enabling critical bridge construction in extreme high-altitude terrain," BRO posted on its X handle on January 14, along with a video showing men and machines working in snow-bound terrain in Ladakh and an overview of a bridge in a forward area. Yesterday, the Chief Secretary of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, was briefed by Chief Engineer, Project Vijayak at Zoji La. Top on the importance of keeping the Zoji La Axis open, and the efforts being undertaken by Project Vijayak and Project Beacon, which is headquartered in Srinagar, in keeping vital connectivity open till as late as feasible despite sub-zero temperatures and harsh winter conditions.

CENTRE SANCTIONS 2

MSME TECH CENTRES FOR PARWANOO, PANDOGA

Diary Times Desk : To promote eco-friendly tourism and improve visitors' mobility, the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) has introduced five battery-operated electric vehicles in its premium units such as The Palace Chail, Teahouse Bud, Palampur, Devdar Khajjiar and New Ros Common, Kasauli. The six-seater vehicles, capable of running up to 60 km on a single charge with a maximum speed of 25 kmph, are expected to greatly enhance the internal transport of guests, especially senior citizens and those with limited mobility. "These battery-operated vehicles will not only facilitate the easy movement of tourists within the units but will also be a boon to elderly visitors," said Rajiv Kumar.

'ATTEMPT TO HIDE OWN MISTAKES': VIKRAMADITYA'S COMMENTS ON BUREAUCRATS FROM OUTSIDE HIMACHAL DRAWS REBUKE FROM ANIRUDH SINGH

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh's remarks against bureaucrats from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have snowballed into a major political controversy, with several Cabinet colleagues terming the statement inappropriate and unfortunate. Revenue Minister Jagat Singh Negi described the remarks as a "sweeping statement" that was discouraging for officials. Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Anirudh Singh, however, took a much stronger stand, stating that ministers should have the tact to get work done. "If someone does not know how to get work done, it is their shortcoming, not that of the government," Anirudh Singh said. He went on to say that making sweeping statements and blaming officials was an attempt to hide one's own mistakes. "In my department, most officers are from outside the state, yet we have not faced any problems. Such statements demoralise officials and adversely affect the image of the government," he said.



HIMACHAL LIKELY TO RECEIVE SNOW AND RAIN FROM JANUARY 16 TO 20

Diary Times Desk : After witnessing a prolonged dry spell, Himachal Pradesh is likely to witness snow and rain from January 16 to 20. As per the State's Meteorological Department, a fresh Western disturbance is likely to affect Western Himalayan region from January 16. As a result, light snowfall and rainfall is very likely to occur in the isolated places of middle and higher hills of the state from January 16 to 20. However, weather is expected to remain dry in low hills and plains of the state. Minimum temperatures across the state are likely to fall by 2°C to 4°C in the next few days while the maximum temperatures are also likely to fall by 2°C to 5°C, leading to intense cold wave conditions in many parts of the state. Meanwhile, the weather was mostly dry across the state during the past 24 hours. Minimum temperatures were mostly normal, ranging between -5°C and 10°C. However, maximum temperatures in many places of the state were 2°C to 4°C above normal, ranging between 2°C and 23°C. Shimla recorded 7.2°C minimum temperature while Dharamsala recorded 3.6°C. Minimum temperature in Manali was 1.9°C, Kangra 3.2°C, Mandi 2.1°C, Solan 0.5°C, Bilaspur 3.5°C, Hamirpur 1.6°C, Kalpa 0.2°C, Sundernagar 0.6°C, Bhuntar 0.9°C, Una 2.4°C.

ARKI BLAZE: 7 MORE CHARRED BODIES RECOVERED FROM RUBBLE

Diary Times Desk : Charred remains of seven bodies were recovered by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) from Arki bazar today during search operations following a massive fire that had engulfed several buildings on Sunday night. With these recoveries the death toll in the mishap has risen to 10 as three fatalities occurred yesterday. The SDRF had on Monday recovered the remains of two bodies and the body of an eight-year-old boy. The NDRF resumed search operations this morning to trace the remaining missing persons, deploying trained sniffer dogs. The first body was located around 9.45 am. As the operation progressed, the teams demolished the rickety walls of a damaged building that posed a threat to their safety. Between 12.45 pm and 1.15 pm, more charred remains were recovered from beneath the debris. Nine Nepalese nationals – two men, two women and five children – were reported missing in the fire. “The recovered remains are burnt beyond recognition and have been sent to the forensic science laboratory for DNA analysis,” said Solan Superintendent of Police Gaurav Singh. As the affected area is a narrow stretch, officials said the rubble was shifted to the nearby Chowgan ground, where search operations would resume tomorrow.

YOUR HOROSCOPE
15-01-2026

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

**CHANDIGARH AIRPORT
CHAOS: 21 FLIGHTS
CANCELLED, SEVERAL
DELAYED DUE TO DENSE
FOG**

Diary Times Desk : As many as 21 flights had to be cancelled and several delayed by as much as five hours due to fog, poor visibility and operational reasons at the Shaheed Bhagat Singh International Airport Chandigarh today. Flight operations almost came to a standstill early in the morning and late in the evening with passengers still waiting for their flights. Twelve arrivals and nine departures were cancelled today. The first flight to take off from the airport was to Hyderabad at 12:50pm, six hours 25 minute behind schedule. All flight arrivals after 9:20pm had to be cancelled as a thick blanket of fog engulfed the Tricity. Most of the departures were three to four hours late. The international flight to Abu Dhabi scheduled for 2:40pm departed at 4:32pm. The Dubai flight (4:50pm) departed at 5:38pm. Meanwhile, the Agra Cantt-Hoshiarpur Express train was cancelled. The Thiruvananthapuram North-Chandigarh Sampark Kranthi arrived at 11:20am, late by one hour and 30 minutes.

**CHANDIGARH COLDER
THAN SHIMLA, MANALI
AND SRINAGAR; SHIVERS
AT 8.9°C**

Diary Times Desk : Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula reeled under an intense cold to severe cold wave on Wednesday as dense to very dense fog, cloud cover, mist, haze and ground frost combined to push the Tricity region into one of its coldest spells of the season. Chandigarh recorded a temperature of just 8.9 degrees Celsius, the lowest of the winter so far, plunging by a 6.3 degrees from Tuesday and settling 9.5 degrees below normal. The sun failed to make even a brief appearance through the day, offering no respite from the biting chill. In a striking contrast, Chandigarh remained much colder than popular hill stations, with Manali, Shimla and Srinagar recording significantly higher day temperatures of 15.2, 14.6 and 13.2 degrees Celsius, respectively. The persistent fog severely reduced visibility and kept daytime heating at bay across the region. The night temperature in Chandigarh, which had dipped to a nine-year low of 2.8 degrees Celsius on the intervening night of Monday.

**169 MISSING GURU GRANTH SAHIB 'SAROOPS' TRACED, CM MANN VOWS TO
HAND THEM OVER TO SGPC**

Diary Times Desk : CM Bhagwant Singh Mann highlighted the issue of missing Guru Granth Sahib 'saroops' at AAP's Maghi rally, saying 169 were traced during the probe. "The SIT found 169 missing 'saroops' from a religious place near Banga, with records existing for only 30. No agency, neither SGPC nor those who managed them, had proper documentation," he said. Mann claimed his government would hand over the 'saroops' to SGPC for installation. "This isn't an achievement we're claiming credit for – it's our duty," he added. Earlier, Mann offered prayers at the historic gurdwara here and paid homage to the 40 'muktas'. "People have gathered here not just to listen to politics but to bow to Guru Sahib," he said. The CM mixed his remarks with political attacks, saying former rulers were trying to regain power, while AAP had given jobs, ensured uninterrupted power, and planned a Rs 10 lakh insurance scheme. He announced Rs 1,000 monthly honorarium for women in the next budget. Mann targeted SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal and PCC chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, but spared BJP. The rally saw a large turnout, with notable attendees including Manish Sisodia and AAP Cabinet ministers.

**HC DENIES ANTICIPATORY BAIL TO
FARIDABAD MC OFFICIALS IN RS 12-CRORE
SCANDAL**

Diary Times Desk : Holding that corruption by public servants is not merely an offence against an individual but "constitutes an offence against the society at large eroding public confidence in the administration", the Punjab and Haryana High Court has refused anticipatory bail to Faridabad Municipal Corporation accused in a case involving alleged siphoning of public funds exceeding Rs 12 crore. Dismissing the pre-arrest bail plea, Justice Sumeet Goel asserted allegations under the Prevention of Corruption Act are by their very nature "serious and grave" and require greater circumspection at the bail stage. The petitioner-public servants were seeking anticipatory bail in FIR registered on August 12, 2025, at Faridabad ACB police station for criminal conspiracy, forgery, cheating, criminal breach of trust and other offences under the IPC and also the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The petitioners, posted in Accounts Branch of the Municipal Corporation, claimed they had "no role whatsoever in issuance of the work orders, technical sanction, enhancement of estimates, execution of work or measurement of works", and argued that their duties were merely clerical and procedural.

**PANCHKULA POLICE BUST GANG BETTING
ON WPL MATCHES, ARREST 7**

Diary Times Desk : Police busted a high-tech gang involved in online betting on Women's Premier League (WPL) matches from a house in Sector 21 Panchkula and arrested seven suspects operating a large-scale betting operation on January 12. Cops received a tip-off that bets were being placed on the outcome of a cricket match between Uttar Pradesh and Bangalore in a rented house in Sector 21.

The police team raided the place and caught Chandigarh residents Pawan Mahajan, Sameer Wadhwa, Anil Kumar, Panchkula resident Amit Bhatia, Ankit Agarwal, Nipun Arora and Anshu Sharma of Jammu. ACP Crime Arvind Kamboj said police seized Rs 7 lakh in cash, 4 laptops, 46 mobile phones, 2 computer monitors, 3 tabs and a large quantity of electronic equipment, including an audio recorder. The accused were taken on one-day police remand on January 13 and have been remanded to judicial custody today. Police have registered a case against the accused under Section 4(1) of the Gambling Act. Investigations have revealed that the accused were using the rented house solely to operate a betting network.

**CASTRATION CASE AGAINST RAM RAHIM: CBI COURT ALLOWS WITNESS'S
COUNSEL IN CONSULATE OFFICE, NOT VC ROOM**

Diary Times Desk : Partly allowing a request by the prime witness in the castration case against Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, a CBI Special Court in Haryana has permitted the witness's counsel to remain present at the Consulate General of India office in New York, but not inside the video-conferencing (VC) room during the recording of evidence. The witness, who resides in New York, is scheduled to depose via VC from the Consulate General of India office against Ram Rahim. He submitted before the CBI Special Magistrate that Ram Rahim was an influential figure with connections to prominent politicians and, considering the Dera chief's stature, he should be allowed to have his counsel present at a remote location during the recording of his statement to help him feel more confident. Opposing the plea, defence counsel argued that there was no provision permitting an advocate to be present at the remote VC location during the recording of evidence. He added that the witness's counsel could, in any case, remain present in court. The defence referred to Rule 10 of the High Court Rules and Orders, contained in Chapter 1-H of Volume-V, which provides a list of remote point coordinators to facilitate the recording of evidence of overseas witnesses. In the present case, an official from the Consulate General of India, New York, would act as the remote point coordinator.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

It's probably just the beginning.

The evolution of drones

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

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

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



Australia's About To Find Out

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

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



Hilary Whiteman

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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INFA

A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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

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



Helen Regan

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

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

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

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

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

But it is difficult to bury the past entirely.

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

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

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

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

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

A blue school bag

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



HOW TO COLLECT MEISSEN PORCELAIN

Diary Times Desk : In the 18th century, porcelain – known at the time as ‘white gold’ – was one of the most highly prized commodities in the world. Trade in porcelain wares from East Asia was booming, but the question of how to imitate them was another matter.

Porcelain was developed in China around 2,000 years ago, but the method for making it remained a mystery to Europeans until the early 18th century, when Johann Friedrich Böttger discovered the magic formula, and in 1710 the Meissen factory was established.

The factory went on to produce some of the finest wares and sculptures ever seen in the West, and remains one of the most sought-after names in European ceramics.

The man who claimed he could make gold – Johann Friedrich Böttger was an alchemist and bragged that he could make gold from base metal. For this, he was imprisoned by the ruler of Saxony, Augustus II the Strong, and told to prove it. Needless to say, Böttger didn’t actually produce any gold, but he did discover how to make hard-paste stoneware, and then ‘true’ porcelain.

The establishment of the Meissen factory – As a result of Böttger’s discovery, Augustus the Strong founded a porcelain factory in the town of Meissen in 1710, hiring a number of artists and craftsmen to produce a wide variety of decorative wares.

The makers began experimenting with various glazes and forms, and recruited glass-cutters from Bohemia. Then, in the early 1720s, a man called Johann Gregorius Höroldt arrived from Vienna and set up the painting workshops. That’s when things really started to take off.

The role of a ‘porcelain-crazy’ ruler – The factory belonged to Augustus, who was porcelain-crazy and already had an enormous collection of Asian pieces. The first monarch in Europe to produce his own ‘true’ porcelain, Augustus ordered huge quantities for himself, as well as selling it to the continent’s grand families. Diplomatic gifts were integral to European politics in the 18th century, and Augustus commissioned a significant number from the factory, including vases – many with an interlaced A and R mark on the underside for ‘Augustus Rex’ – and snuff boxes. Porcelain quickly became a symbol of his power and wealth. Initially, many Meissen designs copied Asian forms or were inspired by them. In the 1720s, Meissen went through a phase of decorating its wares with fantasy chinoiserie scenes. Towards the end of the decade, Kakiemon designs from Japan were also introduced, along with forms inspired by Japanese originals.



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.



BARCELONA MISS OUT ON POTENTIAL REVENUE EVEN AS FORMER DEFENDER CLOSES IN ON JUVENTUS MOVE



Diary Times Desk : For the longest time, it appeared Barcelona were going to be rewarded for Oscar Mingueza’s breakthrough at Celta Vigo. Although Mingueza wasn’t able to make an impact at Barcelona, the club managed to retain 50% of his transfer rights when they sold him to Celta Vigo, valid till the duration of his contract with the new club. It didn’t take long for Mingueza to make an impact at Celta, and for a time, it appeared the Barcelona were going to earn a solid chunk of revenue as big clubs circled around the defender. Four years later, Mingueza is finally on the verge of leaving Celta Vigo, with Juventus all set to acquire the services of the right-back, reports Fabrizio Romano (h/t Mundo Deportivo). However, the move won’t be value accretive for Barcelona at all, as Juventus have cleverly managed to convince Mingueza to join the club at the end of the season.

BARCELONA RISK LOSING 22-YEAR-OLD FORWARD TARGET AS CSKA MOSCOW MAKE EARLY MOVE

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona’s plans for the summer transfer window could suffer a significant setback, with new developments complicating their long-standing interest in Etta Eyong.

According to a report from SPORT, the Blaugrana are now facing serious competition as Levante prepare to listen to offers for the highly rated forward and are open to facilitating his exit at the end of the season.

The situation has accelerated due to strong interest from abroad, as CSKA Moscow have already placed a concrete proposal on the table, offering €25 million plus performance-related add-ons. With bonuses included, the deal would come close to Levante’s €30 million release clause. Despite the attractive figure, Levante are not keen on a straightforward, immediate sale. Instead, they are exploring a more strategic formula that would help them manage their finances in the short term. Levante’s preferred solution involves receiving a portion of the transfer fee now to balance their books, while allowing Etta Eyong to remain until June.

BARCELONA TEENAGE PRODIGY OUT OF COPA EL REY TIE VS RACING SANTANDER DUE TO DISCOMFORT

Diary Times Desk : According to SPORT, Barcelona youngster Pedro ‘Dro’ Fernández did not train in the session prior to the match against Racing Santander and will not travel to Santander for the Copa del Rey tie.

The 18-year-old midfielder will be unavailable and will not join the squad after it was confirmed that he is carrying physical discomfort that prevents him from competing at full capacity.

The coaching staff have chosen not to take risks and, pending official confirmation, everything indicates that he will not be included in the matchday squad.

Dro’s absence represents a significant setback for Hansi Flick, as everything suggested that he could have been given minutes in tomorrow’s game in the Copa del Rey Round of 16.

In fact, the Spain Under-18 national team had released the La Masia graduate from the squad, aware of his discomfort. Although there was confidence that he would recover in time, this has ultimately not been the case.

REPORT – THE THREE BARCELONA PLAYERS MOST DELIGHTED BY JOAO CANCLO RETURN

Diary Times Desk : Joao Cancelo’s return to Barcelona has been met with genuine enthusiasm inside the dressing room, with several key figures already making their feelings clear.

According to a report from Samuel Marsden of ESPN, players such as Fermin Lopez, Gavi and Ronald Araujo are among those particularly pleased to see the Portuguese full-back back in Blaugrana colours.

Cancelo has rejoined Barcelona for the second time in his career, this time on a deal worth around €4 million including wages until the end of the season.

While the move is technically short-term, it carries far more weight than a simple stopgap signing.

Having already spent the 2023–24 campaign at the club under Xavi, Cancelo is returning to an environment he knows well, which significantly reduces the need for adaptation. That familiarity is one of the main reasons behind the positive reaction from within the squad. Sources speaking to ESPN have explained that Cancelo’s previous spell left a strong impression on many of his teammates.

RACING SANTANDER MANAGER HAILS BARCELONA AS ‘MOST IN-FORM TEAM IN THE WORLD’ AHEAD OF COPA DEL REY CLASH

Diary Times Desk : Racing Santander head coach Jose Alberto Lopez has shared his thoughts ahead of one of the most anticipated fixtures at El Sardinero in recent years, as his side gets ready to face Barcelona in the Copa del Rey.

The tie arrives at a moment of huge excitement for the club and its supporters, with Barça travelling to Santander as reigning Spanish Super Cup champions.

From the outset, Jose Alberto made it clear how highly he rates the opposition.

The Racing coach did not shy away from praising Barcelona’s current level, describing them as “the most in-form team in the world and the worst opponent to face.” Despite that, Racing have decided to honour tradition and sporting values by forming a guard of honour before kick-off, a gesture that has drawn attention given recent debates elsewhere.

BARCELONA ON THE RIGHT TRACK TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF LA MASIA JEWEL

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona continue to protect the foundations of their sporting future, and one of the most encouraging internal updates concerns Ebrima Tunkara, widely regarded as one of the brightest prospects in the club’s youth system. A recent report from SPORT has outlined the current situation surrounding the highly rated midfielder, making it clear that his continuity at the club is moving in a positive direction. At just 15 years of age, Ebrima is already competing with Juvenil A, a strong indicator of how highly he is rated inside La Masia. Both the player and the club share the same vision for the medium term, with a clear desire to continue growing together. While a formal agreement has not yet been finalised or signed, the tone of discussions remains calm, constructive, and optimistic. The existing harmony between the parties suggests there is no immediate cause for concern. From Ebrima’s perspective, the path ahead is clear. He believes Barcelona is the ideal environment for his development and feels fully supported by the club at every level.

