

NEWS IN BRIEF

UAE PRESIDENT SHEIKH MOHAMED BIN ZAYED TO VISIT INDIA ON JANUARY 19

Diary Times Desk : At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan will pay an official visit to India on January 19, underscoring the deepening comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, the Ministry of External Affairs announced on Sunday. This will be Sheikh Mohamed's third official visit to India since assuming office as President of the United Arab Emirates, and his fifth visit to the country in the past decade, reflecting the frequency and intensity of high-level engagement between New Delhi and Abu Dhabi.

The visit comes amid sustained momentum in bilateral ties, following recent high-profile exchanges, including the visit of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, in September 2024, and that of Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Crown Prince of Dubai, in April 2025.

ADVOCATES CANNOT SEEK INFORMATION UNDER RTI ACT FOR CLIENTS' CASES: CIC

Diary Times Desk : The Central Information Commission (CIC) has ruled that advocates cannot use the Right to Information (RTI) Act to seek details regarding cases they are handling for clients, observing that using the transparency law in this manner fails to advance its core objectives. Dismissing a second appeal filed by an advocate in a dispute related to the termination of a fruits-and-vegetables supply contract at a Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Haryana, Information Commissioner Sudha Rani Relangi noted that the appellant had sought information "on behalf of his brother, who used to be supplier of vegetables or fruits to the respondent public authority". The commission said in the absence of any explanation as to why the supplier himself could not seek the information, "it appears that the appellant.

DONALD TRUMP NEWS**DONALD TRUMP INVITES INDIA TO BE PART OF BOARD OF PEACE FOR GAZA**

Diary Times Desk : India has been invited by US President Donald Trump to be part of the Board of Peace for Gaza along with other global partners, official sources said on Sunday.

Trump's Board of Peace is being projected by Washington as a new international body to usher in peace and stability in Gaza and beyond, triggering speculation that it may respond to other global conflicts as well.

Originally, the new body was to be tasked with overseeing governance and coordinating funding for Gaza's redevelopment as the strip was devastated during two years of Israeli military offensive.

The US president unveiled the board as part of the second phase of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In October last year, Israel and Hamas agreed to Trump's peace plan. The US president has invited India to be part of the new body, sources said. The White House has already announced that the Board of Peace will play an essential role in fulfilling Trump's 20-point plan of providing strategic oversight, mobilising international resources and ensuring accountability as "Gaza transitions from conflict to peace and development".

The 20-point plan includes making Gaza a de-radicalised terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours and its redevelopment for the benefit of the people of the strip. The White House last week announced forming a founding executive board to operationalise the Board of Peace's vision. The members of the executive committee include US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, former British prime minister Tony Blair, US special envoy to the Middle-East Steve Witkoff, businessman and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and World Bank president Ajay Banga.

PM ACCUSES TMC OF AIDING INFILTRATORS, CALLS FOR ENDING 'MAHA JUNGLE RAJ' IN BENGAL

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the TMC government of "playing with national security by aiding infiltrators" for vote-bank politics, saying it was necessary to end its "maha jungle raj" in West Bengal to pave the way for development and good governance. Addressing a rally in Singur in Hooghly district, he alleged that the state government had "failed" to cooperate with the Centre on critical security measures, including border-fencing.

"The TMC is playing with national security. They are trying to protect infiltrators because they consider them their vote bank," the prime minister claimed. He asserted that the illegal immigrants living in the state by forging documents must be identified and sent back to their countries. "For the last several years, the Centre has been writing to the TMC government seeking land for border-fencing, but the state dispensation did nothing," Modi alleged. The prime minister also accused the TMC of "helping" groups that allegedly facilitate the settlement of infiltrators in Bengal, and asserted that a BJP government would "weed out illegal immigrants" from the state. "Your vote to the BJP will help weed out infiltrators from Bengal," he told the rally, reiterating the party's pitch for a "double-engine government" in the state. Calling for a change of guard, the prime minister said it was essential to end the TMC's "maha jungle raj" and bring a BJP government committed to good governance.

**GOA NIGHTCLUB WHERE 25 DIED IN FIRE WAS FLAGGED FOR ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION IN 2024**

Diary Times Desk : The Goa government has told the legislative assembly that the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub, where 25 persons died in a fire last month, had been flagged for illegal construction by revenue officials in 2024. Twenty-five persons were killed last month in a fire at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub, located at Arpora in North Goa.

State Revenue Minister Atanasio Monserratte, in a written reply to the House on Friday, attached documents that show the club was constructed by demolishing the traditional sluice gate inside the salt pan by illegally converting the land.

The original owners of the property, Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar and Sunil Divkar, had filed a complaint before the Bardez taluka mamlatdar (revenue officer) on December 21, 2023.

The complaint was filed against the then Maizon Lake View Resort (later named as the Birch by Romeo Lane after it was leased out to brothers Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra).

COLD WAVE IN NORTH INDIA: J-K'S SONAMARG FREEZES AT -8.9°C, LIGHT SNOW IN HIMACHAL

Diary Times Desk : Cold wave conditions prevailed in the northern parts of the country, with the minimum temperatures plunging across Kashmir and Punjab's Amritsar shivering at a low of 1.7 degrees Celsius on Sunday. Two men, including a truck driver, were burned to death following a multi-vehicle pileup on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway in Haryana's Nuh on Sunday morning amid dense fog, police said. The accident caused a long traffic jam and severely disrupted traffic on the expressway, they said.

In Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district, a pile-up involving at least 20 vehicles on the Delhi-Lucknow National Highway amid dense fog on Sunday morning left a person dead and at least 24 injured, police said. Sonamarg in Jammu and Kashmir was the coldest place in the Valley, recording a low of minus 8.9 degrees Celsius, officials said on Sunday. Srinagar recorded a low of minus 4.7 degrees Celsius. The meteorological department has forecast spells of wet weather, especially in the higher reaches of the Valley over the next few days. Shopian in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 6.7 degrees Celsius, while Pahalgam recorded a minimum temperature of minus 6 degrees Celsius. The higher hills of Himachal Pradesh saw light snow at isolated places. The Shimla meteorological office stated that light snow occurred in Lahaul and Spiti district's Koksar and Hansa villages, while the weather remained dry in most parts of the state.

MK STALIN

STALIN ANNOUNCES TAMIL NADU GOVT LITERARY AWARD FOR 7 NON-HINDI LANGUAGES, HITS OUT AT CENTRE

Diary Times Desk : Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday announced annual literary awards in 7 languages including Tamil, Bengali and Marathi and slammed the Centre for alleged political intervention in the Sahitya Akademi awards.

The award, under the auspices of the Tamil Nadu government, would carry a Rs 5 lakh cash prize, he said, adding it is named "Semmozhi Illakiya Virudhu (Classical Language Literary Award)".

In the first phase, awards would be for the best works in the languages of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odiya, Bengali and Marathi.

In his address at the valedictory event of the Chennai International Book Fair (CIBF-2026), the chief minister said the Sahitya Akademi awards announcement had been cancelled recently and it was discomfiting. It was due to the intervention of the Union Culture Ministry, he alleged. Underlining what he called the uncertainty over the awards, he said "political interventions, even in art and literary awards is dangerous." Under such circumstances, the CM said several writers and representatives of art/literary bodies had appealed to him for an appropriate, constructive, counter-action plan.

EVERY VOTE COUNTS: MAHARASHTRA CANDIDATE WINS MC POLL BY JUST 1 VOTE

Diary Times Desk : The poll in Ward 1A of Parbhani Municipal Corporation in Maharashtra got as close as possible with a Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate winning by a margin of just one vote, the verdict lending itself nicely to the oft-repeated electoral cliché that voting matters as every vote counts. Vyankat Dahale of the Uddhav Thackeray-led party bagged 4,312 votes, just ahead of the 4,311 votes garnered by his BJP rival Prasad Nagare, an official said on Sunday. Shiv Sena candidate Mohan Sonawane got 1,363 votes in the ward, while 113 electors opted for None Of The Above (NOTA), he added. Incidentally, Parbhani is the only municipal corporation in Marathwada where the Shiv Sena (UBT) managed to get more seats than the Bharatiya Janata Party, which otherwise had a stellar electoral outing across the state. The Shiv Sena (UBT) won 25 seats in Parbhani against the BJP's 12. Polls to 29 municipal corporations across Maharashtra were held on January 15, while results were announced a day later.

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PM UNVEILS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WORTH OVER RS 830 CRORE IN BENGAL



Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched development projects worth over Rs 830 crore in West Bengal and flagged off three Amrit Bharat trains connecting Kolkata with other parts of the country. At a function in Hooghly district’s Singur, the prime minister also inaugurated the Jayrambati-Barogopinathpur-Maynapur rail line, and flagged off a train between Maynapur and Jayrambati. “All central projects will accelerate the development of West Bengal. The central government is working to meet the goal of a developed eastern India,” the prime minister said while addressing the programme. The PM laid the foundation stone for the Extended Port Gate System, including an Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminal and a road over bridge, at Balagarh in Hooghly district, according to a statement issued by PMO. Spread over approximately 900 acres of land, Balagarh is being developed as a modern cargo handling terminal with an envisaged capacity of about 2.7 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). The Balagarh project aims to significantly improve cargo evacuation efficiency by diverting vessel movement away from congested urban corridors.

‘HINDU DECLINE’ TO BE BJP’S MAIN POLL PITCH IN KERALA

Diary Times Desk : Ahead of Kerala Assembly elections this year, the BJP has called for a debate on the ‘decline of Hindu community in the state.’ Making the pitch, BJP Kerala chief Rajeev Chandrashekhkar today said there must be an honest debate about the silent decline of the Hindu community in Kerala over the last two decades under Congress-CPM rule. The facts are uncomfortable, but undeniable, he said citing indicators to flag the disadvantages for Hindus in Kerala. “Hindus are today the poorest community in Kerala, Hindus have the lowest per capita land ownership in the state, Hindus have the lowest per capita house ownership in the state. Stating facts is not communalism. Suppressing them is,” Chandrashekhkar said. He said for decades, the realities around Hindus of the state were buried under the cover of ‘fake secularism’ by Congress and CPM — parties that now openly align with radical, anti-democratic forces like Jamaat-e-Islami for votes. “This election is not only about their corruption, malgovernance, unemployment and inflation. It is also about their appeasement politics and resulting injustice, lack of dignity, inequity for all other Malayalees. The BJP/NDA will ensure this conversation is conducted and truth is told,” he said.

TECHIE DIES AS CAR PLUNGES INTO WATER-FILLED PIT IN GREATER NOIDA; RESCUE DELAY, NEGLIGENCE ALLEGED

Diary Times Desk : A 27-year-old software engineer died after his car went out of control and plunged into an over 20-ft-deep, water-filled pit in Sector 150 of Greater Noida amid fog, police said on Sunday. While locals staged protests alleging negligence and lack of safety measures at the accident-prone site, the police said an FIR has been lodged against two real estate developers. Yuvraj Mehta was a resident of Tata Eureka Park society. He worked as a software engineer with a reputed company in Gurugram and was returning home from work when the accident occurred in the early hours of Saturday, police said. According to police at the Knowledge Park police station, information was received around 12.15 am that a car had fallen into a pit dug for the basement of an under-construction building. A search operation was launched and the body was recovered later on Saturday morning with the help of teams from the fire department, State Disaster Response Force, National Disaster Response Force and the local police. However, Moninder, a delivery agent who claimed to be an eyewitness, alleged that rescue efforts were delayed.

7 KILLED, 80 INJURED AFTER
BUS CARRYING MARRIAGE
PARTY OVERTURNS IN
JHARKHAND'S LATEHAR

Diary Times Desk : At least seven people, including five women, were killed and over 80 others injured after a bus carrying wedding guests overturned in Jharkhand's Latehar district on Sunday, police said. The accident occurred at Orsa Bangladara valley under Mahuadanr police station limits. "A bus carrying a marriage party was coming from Balrampur district in Chhattisgarh for a wedding at Mahuadanr in Latehar. The bus overturned, and five people died on the spot. Among them, four were women. The injured were taken to a hospital," Superintendent of Police Kumar Gaurav said. Two persons died during treatment in hospital, another official said. In a post on X, Chief Minister Hemant Soren asked the Latehar deputy commissioner to provide appropriate medical facilities to the injured. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Vipin Kumar Dubey said 60 injured were admitted to Mahuadanr community health centre and over 20 at a private hospital. "Thirty-two people, who are serious, are being referred to RIMS Ranchi for better treatment," he said.

ED FILES CHARGESHEET
AGAINST ONLINE BETTING APP
HANDLED BY PAK NATIONALS

Diary Times Desk : The Enforcement Directorate on Sunday said it had filed a chargesheet against an online betting website whose Pakistani directors are based in the UAE. A total of 14 individuals and companies have been named as accused in the case against Magicwin. India banned real-money online gaming and betting in 2025, calling it a financial and social menace as it drains the hard-earned money of users, especially the youth. The prosecution complaint (equivalent to a chargesheet) was filed on January 15 before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, the federal probe agency said in a statement. The money laundering case stems from an Ahmedabad cyber crime police FIR, which booked the portal on charges of unauthorised hosting, streaming and broadcasting of ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 matches, for which rights had been given to Star India Pvt. Ltd by the International Cricket Council (ICC). Magicwin Sports Ltd. owns the brand portal and the company is registered in the United Kingdom, with Pakistani nationals Gulab Harji Mal and Omesh Kumar Gurnani as its directors. The two are apparently based in the United Arab Emirates, the ED said.

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FOUR MEMBERS OF FAMILY FEARED
DROWNED IN SHIVAMOGGA CANAL

Diary Times Desk : Four members of a family are feared drowned after going missing in a river canal here on Sunday, police said. The missing have been identified as Neelabai (50), her son Ravikumar (23), daughter Shwetha (24), and son-in-law Parashuram (28). Police said the family had come to visit relatives in connection with a local jatre (festival). "Preliminary information suggests the incident occurred when they went to the canal to wash clothes. One person is suspected to have slipped into the water, and the others may have entered in an attempt to rescue him, leading to all four going missing," a police officer said. Police, fire and emergency services personnel launched a search operation soon after the incident was reported. "Search operations are underway to trace the missing persons. However, with darkness setting in, the fire services team is likely to suspend operations and resume them tomorrow," police said. Senior officers visited the site, reviewed the situation, and consoled the family members.

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TMC ACCUSES MODI OF 'PEDDLING LIES' AT
SINGUR RALLY IN BENGAL

Diary Times Desk : The Trinamool Congress on Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "peddling lies" at his Singur rally in West Bengal, asserting that contrary to his claims of large-scale infiltration, the authorities were yet to detect a large number of Bangladeshis in the voters' list in the SIR exercise. TMC state president Joy Prakash Majumdar told PTI that Modi had spoken of the presence of a large number of infiltrators without clarifying whether border security was the responsibility of the Centre or the West Bengal government. "For the past 11 years, Modiji has been repeating the same set of lies about infiltrators, Bangladeshis and Rohingyas without explaining how he arrived at such conclusions," Majumdar said. He said the Election Commission itself had stated that the SIR exercise identified 58 lakh unmapped voters, a figure that, he claimed, did not support the allegations made by Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah or other BJP leaders. "None of the omission of around 58 lakh names.

PM MODI LAYS FOUNDATION STONE FOR KAZIRANGA ELEVATED
CORRIDOR, FLAGS OFF 2 AMRIT BHARAT TRAINS

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday laid the foundation stone for the Rs 6,957-crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor, and virtually flagged off two Amrit Bharat trains in Assam's Nagaon district. Modi, who arrived here from Guwahati in the final leg of his two-day visit to the state, performed 'Bhoomi Poojan' of the Kaziranga project. The corridor is aimed at ensuring safe wildlife movement across the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, reduce road accidents on National Highway-715, and boost ecotourism, while generating local employment opportunities, an official said. It forms part of the four-laning of the Kaliabor-Numaligarh section of NH-715, and includes around 34.45 km of elevated wildlife-friendly corridors, along with bypasses at Jakhlabandha and Bokakhat, he said. Modi also reviewed a model of the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor.



**EUROPE WARNS OF 'DANGEROUS
DOWNWARD SPIRAL' AFTER TRUMP
THREATENS TARIFFS OVER GREENLAND**

Diary Times Desk : The eight European countries targeted by US President Donald Trump for a 10 per cent tariff for opposing American control of Greenland blasted the move Sunday, warning that the American leader's threats "undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral."

In an unusual and very strong joint statement coming from major US allies, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland on Sunday said troops sent to Greenland for the Danish military training exercise "Arctic Endurance" pose "no threat to anyone."

Trump's Saturday announcement sets up a potentially dangerous test of US partnerships in Europe. The Republican president appeared to indicate that he was using the tariffs as leverage to force talks over the status of Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark that he regards as critical to US national security. "We stand in full solidarity with the Kingdom of Denmark and the people of Greenland," the group said. "Building on the process begun last week, we stand ready to engage in a dialogue based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that we stand firmly behind. Tariff threats undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral." There are immediate questions about how the White House could try to implement the tariffs because the EU is a single economic zone in terms of trading.

**TRUMP VOWS 10% TARIFFS ON DENMARK, UK, FRANCE AMONG 8 NATIONS FOR
OPPOSING US CONTROL OF GREENLAND**

Diary Times Desk : President Donald Trump on Saturday vowed to implement a wave of increasing tariffs on European allies until the United States is allowed to buy Greenland, escalating a row over the future of Denmark's vast Arctic island. In a post on Truth Social, Trump said additional 10% import tariffs would take effect on February 1 on goods from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and Great Britain — all already subject to tariffs imposed by Trump. Those tariffs would increase to 25% on June 1 and would continue until a deal was reached for the US to purchase Greenland, Trump wrote. Trump has repeatedly insisted he will settle for nothing less than ownership of Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark. Leaders of both Denmark and Greenland have insisted the island is not for sale and does not want to be part of the United States.

**AT LEAST 5,000 KILLED IN IRANIAN UNREST,
OFFICIAL SAYS, AS JUDICIARY HINTS AT
EXECUTIONS**

Diary Times Desk : At least 5,000 people have been killed in protests in Iran, including about 500 security personnel, an Iranian official in the region said on Sunday, citing verified figures and accusing "terrorists and armed rioters" of killing "innocent Iranians". The nationwide protests erupted on December 28 over economic hardship and swelled over two weeks into widespread demonstrations calling for the end of clerical rule — resulting in the deadliest unrest since the 1979 Islamic revolution. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to intervene if protesters continued to be killed on the streets or were executed. In a social media post on Friday, he thanked Tehran's leaders, saying they had called off scheduled mass executions. On Saturday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said: "We will not drag the country into war, but we will not let domestic or international criminals go unpunished," state media reported. On Sunday, the judiciary indicated that executions may go ahead. "A series of actions have been identified as Mohareb, which is among the most severe Islamic punishments," Iranian judiciary spokesperson Asghar Jahangir said.

**'WHY AMERICANS PAYING FOR AI IN INDIA':
WHITE HOUSE TRADE ADVISOR AS HE
RENEWES ATTACK ON DELHI**

Diary Times Desk : White House trade advisor Peter Navarro has renewed his criticism of India, questioning why Americans are paying for Artificial Intelligence in India. Navarro's comments on Saturday came amid a strain in India-US ties, which began after US President Donald Trump slapped a 50 per cent tariff on New Delhi, including a 25 per cent additional duty for its purchase of Russian crude oil. In an interview on Real America's Voice, Navarro said, "...It's like, why are Americans paying for AI in India? Chat GPT (is) operating on US soil, using American electricity, servicing large users of Chat GPT, for example, in India and China and elsewhere around the world. So that's another issue that's got to be dealt with." His comments came as ties between New Delhi.

**GERMANY WILL NOT BE
'BLACKMAILED' BY TRUMP:
MINISTER**

Diary Times Desk : Germany and its European partners will not be "blackmailed" by Donald Trump, German finance minister and vice chancellor Lars Klingbeil said on Sunday, after the US President announced additional tariffs to pressure Europe in the Greenland dispute.

Germany will always extend a hand to the US to find common solutions but Berlin cannot go along with Washington on this point, Klingbeil said in a statement.

"And so the very clear signal: we will not be blackmailed, and there will be a European response," he added.

**DRONE STRIKE CUTS POWER
SUPPLY IN RUSSIA-HELD PARTS
OF UKRAINE'S ZAPORIZHZHIA
REGION**

Diary Times Desk : More than 2,00,000 consumers in the Russian-held part of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region were left without electricity on Sunday, the Moscow-installed regional governor said, after a Ukrainian drone strike on Saturday.

In a statement posted on Telegram, Yevgeny Balitsky said that work was ongoing to restore the power supply, but that almost 400 settlements remain without electricity.

Temperatures are well below freezing throughout the southeastern Zaporizhzhia region, around 75% of which is controlled by Russia.

Russia has frequently bombarded Ukraine's power infrastructure throughout its nearly four-year war, causing rolling daily blackouts, and has also targeted heating systems this winter.

Separately, the governor of the Russian border region of Belgorod, which has come under regular Ukrainian attack since 2022, said that one person had been killed and another wounded by a drone strike on the border village of Nechaevka. Further south, in the Caucasus mountains region of North Ossetia, two children and one adult were injured when a Ukrainian drone struck a residential building in the town of Beslan, the region's governor said.

'NO INTIMIDATION WILL INFLUENCE US IN UKRAINE OR GREENLAND': MACRON VOWS UNITED RESPONSE

Diary Times Desk : French President Emmanuel Macron strongly opposed US President Donald Trump's tariff threats over Greenland, calling them "unacceptable" and vowed to respond in a united and coordinated manner.

In a post on X, Macron maintained France's commitment to ensure the sovereignty of Greenland and Ukraine and said that the country will not be deterred from any "intimidation or threats." "No intimidation or threat will influence us--neither in Ukraine, nor in Greenland, nor anywhere else in the world when we are confronted with such situations," Macron said.

"Tariff threats are unacceptable and have no place in this context. Europeans will respond in a united and coordinated manner should they be confirmed. We will ensure that European sovereignty is upheld," he added. Macron insisted that France's commitment to the sovereignty and independence of nations guided them to take a stand on Ukraine and take part in the military exercise in Greenland to ensure the region's security. "France is committed to the sovereignty and independence of nations, in Europe and elsewhere. This guides our choices. It underpins our commitment to the United Nations and to its Charter. It is on this basis that we support, and will continue to support Ukraine and that we have built a coalition of the willing for a robust and lasting peace, to defend these principles and our security," he said.



GUATEMALAN INMATES TAKE OVER PRISONS, HOLDING 46 PEOPLE HOSTAGE

Diary Times Desk : Guatemalan security forces were working to take back control of three prisons on Saturday after rioting inmates took at least 46 people hostage, as officials blamed the incident on gang members demanding greater privileges. As of Saturday afternoon, there were no reported deaths or injuries among the hostages, Interior Minister Marco Antonio Villeda said at a press conference. The hostages are mostly guards but include a psychologist, a prison official said. Villeda said prisoners coordinated riots at three prisons, which he alleged were organised by the Barrio 18 gang, which was rioting because its leader is seeking a transfer to another facility to gain better conditions and special treatment. A statement from the interior ministry said the riots were a "direct reaction" to the ministry's moves to revoke privileges from gang leaders.

TRUMP'S GAZA PEACE BOARD CHARTER SEEKS \$1 BILLION FOR EXTENDED MEMBERSHIP, DOCUMENT SHOWS

Diary Times Desk : A draft charter sent to about 60 countries by the US administration calls for members to contribute \$1 billion in cash if they want their membership to last more than three years, according to a document.

"Each Member State shall serve a term of no more than three years from this Charter's entry into force, subject to renewal by the Chairman," the document, first reported by Bloomberg News, shows.

"The three-year membership term shall not apply to Member States that contribute more than USD \$1,000,000,000 in cash funds to the Board of Peace within the first year of the Charter's entry into force."

US PREZ TRUMP INVITES INDIA TO BE PART OF GAZA PEACE BOARD: SOURCES

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump has invited India to be a part of the Gaza Board of Peace, according to sources. The invitation comes as the US administration moves forward with formalising the "Board of Peace" structure linked to Trump's broader Gaza roadmap. On Friday, the White House unveiled the list of people appointed to the "Board of Peace" to oversee phase two of his 20-Point Peace Plan to end the Gaza conflict. The names include US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Trump special envoy Steve Witkoff, President of the World Bank Ajay Banga, and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the White House said in a statement. The list also includes Apollo Global Management's CEO, Marc Rowan, and US Deputy National Security Adviser Robert Gabriel. Explaining the roles and responsibilities under the initiative, the White House said, "Executive Board members will oversee defined portfolios critical to Gaza's stabilisation and long-term success, including, but not limited to, governance capacity-building, regional relations, reconstruction, investment attraction, large-scale funding, and capital mobilisation."



INDONESIA FINDS WRECKAGE OF MISSING SURVEILLANCE PLANE, RECOVERS ONE OF 10 BODIES ON BOARD

Diary Times Desk : Indonesian authorities said on Sunday they had located the wreckage of a fisheries surveillance plane that went missing in South Sulawesi province on the slope of a fog-covered mountain and had recovered the body of one of the 10 people on board. The ATR 42-500 turboprop, owned by aviation group Indonesia Air Transport, lost contact with air traffic control on Saturday at about 1.30 pm local time around the Maros region in South Sulawesi.

There were seven crew members and three passengers on board the plane, which was chartered by Indonesia's Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministry to conduct air surveillance on fisheries. The passengers were ministry staff members.

Authorities had initially said eight crew members were on board but later revised the figure. The plane was flying to Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi, from Yogyakarta before losing contact. On Sunday morning, local rescuers found the wreckage in different locations around Mount Bulusaraung in the Maros region, said Andi Sultan, an official at South Sulawesi's rescue agency. The mountain is roughly 1,500 km northeast of the sprawling island nation's capital, Jakarta.

PRO- AND ANTI-ICE DEMONSTRATORS CLASH DURING MINNEAPOLIS IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN

Diary Times Desk : Protesters for and against the Trump administration's latest immigration crackdown clashed in Minneapolis on Saturday as the governor's office announced that National Guard troops had been mobilised and stood ready to assist state law enforcement, though they were not yet deployed to city streets. There have been protests every day since the Department of Homeland Security ramped up immigration enforcement in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St Paul by bringing in more than 2,000 federal officers.

A large group of protesters turned out in downtown Minneapolis and confronted a much smaller group of people attending an anti-Somali and pro-Immigration and Customs Enforcement rally. They chased the pro-ICE group away and forced at least one member to take off a shirt they deemed objectionable. Jake Lang, who organised the anti-Islam and pro-ICE demonstration, appeared to be injured as he left the scene, with bruises and scrapes on his head. He said via social media beforehand that he intended to "burn a Quran" on the steps of City Hall.

ISRAELI FIRM COMMIT ACQUIRES AFRICAN TECH TALENT PLATFORM SAVANNAH

Diary Times Desk : Israeli software solutions leader Commit has acquired Savannah, a startup that recruits and employs top tech talent from African countries for global development teams. Founded in 2022 by Itai Azogui, the Tel Aviv-based Savannah has placed over 100 developers with companies including Firefly and Aqua Security. The acquisition, reportedly worth several million dollars in cash, integrates Savannah's team into Commit's Offshore division, expanding its reach beyond Eastern Europe into Africa. "Africa is one of the highest-quality yet underleveraged talent markets in the world," said Commit Chairman Arik Feingold. The move positions the Israeli firm to connect startups and enterprises with skilled African developers, particularly for AI and R&D projects.



PENTAGON MOBILISES OLMOST 1,500 SOLDIERS FOR DEPLOYMENT IN MINNESOTA

Diary Times Desk : The US Department of War ordered about 1,500 active-duty soldiers to prepare for a possible deployment in Minnesota, The Washington Post reported, citing defence officials. The soldiers are assigned to two infantry battalions with the Army's 11th Airborne Division, which is based in Alaska and specialises in cold-weather operations. The Army placed the units on prepare-to-deploy orders in case violence in Minnesota escalates, officials said, characterising the move as "prudent planning." It is not clear whether any of them will be sent to the state, the officials told The Washington Post. The White House said in a statement that it's typical for the Pentagon "to be prepared for any decision the President may or may not make." Spokesperson for the Defence Department did not respond to requests for comment. The development was reported earlier by ABC News.

UAE RATIFIES INTERNATIONAL FORCED LABOUR PROTOCOL

Diary Times Desk : On January 15, the United Arab Emirates ratified the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, becoming the sixty-third country worldwide and the second among members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to ratify this instrument. With this ratification, the UAE is demonstrating its firm commitment to combating forced labour in all its forms, including human trafficking. Overwhelmingly adopted during the 2014 International Labour Conference, the Protocol reinforces the international legal framework for combating forced labour. It commits States Parties to take measures to combat forced labour, including trafficking in persons, debt bondage, or forced domestic labour, sanction the perpetrators, and protect victims, including by ensuring their access to justice and effective legal remedies. In this regard, Jamal Al Musharakh, UAE Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

"MATTERS BETWEEN ALLIES ARE RESOLVED THROUGH DISCUSSION, NOT PRESSURE": FINNISH PRESIDENT AMID GREENLAND ROW



Diary Times Desk : Expressing support for Denmark and Greenland, Finnish President Alexander Stubb stressed that disputes between allies must be resolved through dialogue and shared rules rather than political or economic pressure. Emphasising European unity and respect for territorial integrity, Stubb reaffirmed Finland's support for Denmark and Greenland, highlighted the importance of strengthening Arctic security with allies, and cautioned that potential U.S. tariffs could damage transatlantic relations and trigger a harmful escalation. In a post on X, he said, "Finland proceeds from the principle that matters between allies are resolved through discussion and shared rules of the game, not by creating pressure. Strengthening Arctic security together with allies is important for Finland. This is also the goal of the activity in Greenland led by Denmark and coordinated among the allies. European countries stand united. We emphasize the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. We support Denmark and Greenland. Dialogue with the United States continues. Tariffs would be detrimental to the transatlantic relationship and could lead to a harmful spiral,"

TRUMP SAYS "ICE IS REMOVING SOME OF THE MOST VIOLENT CRIMINALS" AMID MINNEAPOLIS IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump defended intensified federal immigration enforcement following a deadly Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operation in Minneapolis, sharply criticising Minnesota leaders and the backlash to the raids while reiterating his hard-line stance on immigration. In a Truth Social post, Trump wrote that "ICE is removing some of the most violent criminals in the World from our Country, and bring them back home, where they belong." He questioned why Minnesota officials were resisting the enforcement efforts and urged them to stop what he described as shielding violent offenders. "Why is Minnesota fighting this? Do they really want murderers and drug dealers to be ensconced in their community?" Trump wrote, framing the issue in terms of crime and public safety. Trump also criticised protesters opposing ICE raids, calling them "highly paid professional agitators and anarchists" and alleging that state politicians were using the unrest to divert attention from alleged political scandals. "The crooked Governor and 'Congresswoman' Omar, who married her brother, don't mind because it keeps the focus of attention off the 18 Billion Dollar, Plus, FRAUD, that has taken place in the State! Don't worry, we're on it!" Trump posted.

SCIENTISTS PINPOINT TISSUE-REGENERATING CELLS, OFFERING HOPE FOR CANCER AND BURN VICTIMS

Diary Times Desk : For the first time, scientists have identified the specific cells that allow severely damaged tissue to regenerate after widespread destruction, a discovery that could change how cancer relapse is prevented, researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science told The Press Service of Israel. Their study, recently published in the peer-reviewed Nature Communications, focuses on a phenomenon known for decades as "compensatory proliferation" -- the ability of tissue to regrow after radiation wipes out large numbers of cells. The effect was first observed in the 1970s in fruit flies, but until now, scientists did not know which cells were responsible or how the process worked at a molecular level. Professor Eli Arama from the Department of Molecular Genetics at the Weizmann Institute, who supervised the study, told TPS-IL that while the phenomenon.

MILITARY EFFORTS IN GREENLAND INTENDED TO CONTRIBUTE TO SECURITY IN ARCTIC REGION": NETHERLAND FM

Diary Times Desk : David van Weel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, said that the military efforts in Greenland are intended to improve security in the Arctic region. Weel, in a post on X, said that they have taken note of US President Donald Trump's tariffs. He said, "We have taken note of President Trump's announcement on tariffs. Military efforts related to exercises in Greenland are intended to contribute to security in the Arctic region. The Netherlands is in close contact with the EU Commission and partners on our response." Earlier in the day, United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer has strongly condemned US President Donald Trump's threats to impose tariffs on European nations over Greenland, calling the move "completely wrong." In a statement posted on X on Sunday, the UK PM reiterated Britain's stance on Greenland, noting that the Arctic island is "part of the Kingdom of Denmark, and its future is a matter for the Greenlanders and the Danes."

'A PRIZE CANNOT EVEN SYMBOLICALLY BE PASSED ON', SAYS NOBEL FOUNDATION

Diary Times Desk : The Nobel Foundation once again reiterated that Nobel Prizes cannot be passed on or further distributed, days after the Institute issued a statement saying that a laureate cannot share the prize with others, nor transfer it once it has been announced. On Sunday, in a post on X, it said that one of the core missions of the Nobel Foundation is to safeguard the dignity of the Nobel Prizes and their administration. The post noted, "The Foundation upholds Alfred Nobel's will and its stipulations. It states that the prizes shall be awarded to those who 'have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind,' and it specifies who has the right to award each respective prize. A prize can therefore not, even symbolically, be passed on or further distributed." This comes after US President Donald Trump met Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel laureate Maria Corina Machado on Thursday and said that she had presented her Nobel Peace Prize medal to Trump at the White House.

"PM MODI CAN HANDLE NIJJAR TRIAL, TRADE PACT WITH CANADA TOGETHER; HE IS CLEVER AND QUITE RUTHLESS": VETERAN CANADIAN JOURNALIST MILEWSKI

Diary Times Desk : Veteran Canadian journalist Terry Milewski has described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "enormously clever" and "quite ruthless," saying he may be one of the few leaders capable of simultaneously navigating the sensitive Hardeep Singh Nijjar murder trial in Canada and a potential trade pact, despite lingering diplomatic tensions between the two countries, which began after Ottawa, under former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, accused the Indian government of involvement in the killing of Khalistani terrorist Nijjar. Speaking in an interview with ANI, Milewski said the Nijjar issue has become a major stumbling block in bilateral ties, even though most Canadians are largely unfamiliar with the slain Khalistani separatist leader, arguing that the controversy was amplified by a small but influential group of Khalistan supporters in Canada. "I will take my hat off. If anyone can do it, probably Narendra Modi is the man. He's an enormously clever man, and he's also quite ruthless. And you can add Amit Shah into the mix and so on," Milewski said. Addressing allegations against India, Milewski said he does not believe Canada's law enforcement agencies are corrupt or acting under political pressure. He stressed that the matter is now before the courts and will be decided through due legal process. "This thing is going to court. There will be charges, people under oath, and evidence made public. The [Canadian] Prime Minister cannot simply call the RCMP and shut it down," he said.

**INVITED TO JOIN TRUMP'S GAZA "BOARD OF PEACE": PAKISTAN FOREIGN OFFICE**

Diary Times Desk : Pakistan has been invited to join the Gaza "Board of Peace" being formed by United States President Donald Trump, the Pakistan Foreign Office stated. Responding to media queries, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said, "The prime minister of Pakistan has received the invitation from the president of the United States to join the Board of Peace on Gaza." Andrabi said Pakistan will continue to engage with international initiatives aimed at restoring peace and stability in Gaza, while working towards a lasting solution to the Palestine issue in line with United Nations resolutions. "Pakistan will remain engaged with international efforts for peace and security in Gaza, leading to a lasting solution to the Palestine issue in accordance with United Nations resolutions," he added. The invitation comes as the US administration moves forward with formalising the "Board of Peace" structure linked to Trump's.

UAE PRESIDENT TO VISIT INDIA ON JAN 19

Diary Times Desk : At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, will pay an official visit to India on January 19, a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs said. This will be Nahyan's third official visit to India since assuming office as President of the UAE, and his fifth visit to India over the past decade. The visit builds on the strong momentum generated by recent high-level exchanges, including the visit of Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi in September 2024, and the visit of Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the UAE and Crown Prince of Dubai in April 2025. India and the UAE share warm, close, and multi-faceted relations, underpinned by strong political, cultural, and economic ties. The two countries are among each other's top trading and investment partners, bolstered by the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the Local Currency Settlement (LCS) system, and the Bilateral Investment Treaty. India and the UAE also enjoy a robust energy partnership, including long-term energy supply arrangements. The visit will provide an opportunity for the two leaders to chart new frontiers for the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

UAE SIGNS COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH IFRC TO SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS IN SUDAN

Diary Times Desk : The United Arab Emirates has signed a cooperation agreement with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to support urgent humanitarian efforts in Sudan, allocating US\$11 million as part of the USD 100 million pledged by the UAE during the United Nations Security Council meeting in October. The agreement was signed by Tareq Ahmed Al Ameri, Chairman of the UAE Aid Agency, and Jagan Chapagain, Secretary-General of the IFRC. The funding aims to strengthen the humanitarian response to the ongoing crisis in Sudan and support communities affected by the conflict. Under the agreement, US\$10 million will be directed toward supporting host communities accommodating Sudanese refugees in Chad, South Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia, while US\$1 million will be allocated to the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF).

INVESTING IN WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT KEY TO RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE ECONOMY: WEF'S EBURU OZDEMIR

Diary Times Desk : Investing in women's employment is the most efficient way of achieving a resilient, inclusive and future-proof economy, according to Ebrur Ozdemir, Chairperson of the Board, Limak Holding, and Chair of World Economic Forum Engineering and Construction Industry Group. In an article ahead of the annual Davos summit, Ebrur Ozdemir noted that reskilling and upskilling programmes must be gender-focused to truly keep pace with the evolving digital economy. Her article also suggested that integrating more women into STEM professions is essential for finding the human capital needed to solve planetary-scale issues. "We cannot achieve a sustainable economy without gender parity in STEM. Putting women at the forefront of engineering and technology is the most crucial investment for growth and resilience," she writes. In her article titled 'From digital divide to investment dividend: Why women are the key to a future-proof workforce,' she argues that the world must reframe the investment in women and girls not as a social expense, but as the highest-return capital expenditure for the resilient, inclusive and future-proof economy the world desperately needs.

RATIONALISE CUSTOMS DUTY ON IMPORTED LUXURY CARS: MERCEDES-BENZ INDIA CEO

Diary Times Desk : A rationalisation of customs duties on imported luxury cars would help stimulate demand in the premium segment, leading to higher overall tax revenue for the government, according to Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO Santosh Iyer. Besides, a more stable macroeconomic policy and improved fiscal management to arrest the ongoing decline of the rupee would help luxury car makers, which have been forced to increase prices due to rising input costs that, in turn, have had an impact on demand, Iyer told PTI when asked about expectations in the upcoming Union Budget. Terming GST 2.0, under which rates were rationalised last year as "a very positive step", he said, "The same should happen for customs duties as well". At present.

MCAP OF 3 OF TOP-10 MOST VALUED FIRMS JUMPS BY RS 75,855 CRORE; STATE BANK, INFOSYS BIGGEST WINNERS

Diary Times Desk : The combined market valuation of three of the top-10 most valued firms jumped Rs 75,855.43 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with State Bank of India and Infosys emerging as the biggest gainers, in an otherwise sluggish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex dipped 5.89 points, and the NSE Nifty went up by 11.05 points. While ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Infosys were the gainers, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Larsen & Toubro faced a combined erosion of Rs 75,549.89 crore from their valuation. The combined erosion of these seven firms was less than the total m-cap addition of Rs 75,855.43 crore of the three companies - ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Infosys. SBI's market valuation jumped Rs 39,045.51 crore to Rs 9,62,107.27 crore, becoming the biggest gainer. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys surged Rs 31,014.59 crore to Rs 7,01,889.59 crore. ICICI Bank added Rs 5,795.33 crore taking its valuation to Rs 10,09,470.28 crore. However, the mcap of Reliance Industries tumbled Rs 23,952.48 crore to Rs 19,72,493.21 crore.



DAVOS DECKED UP FOR WEF 2026 AS MADHYA PRADESH SHOWCASES INDIA'S INVESTMENT PROMISE

Diary Times Desk : The Alpine town of Davos is once again at the centre of global attention as it prepares to host the 56th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) from January 19 to 23, 2026. With streets decked up and security tightened, Davos-Klosters is set to welcome nearly 3,000 participants from over 130 countries, including a record number of world leaders, CEOs, innovators and policymakers. Held under the theme "A Spirit of Dialogue", the WEF Annual Meeting 2026 comes at a critical juncture for global cooperation, bringing together top political leaders, including heads of state and government, alongside global CEOs and leading unicorns and technology pioneers. Amid this high-level global gathering, Madhya Pradesh is stepping onto the world stage to showcase its emergence as one of India's most dynamic and future-ready investment destinations. As Davos readies itself for five days of intense dialogue and deal-making, Madhya Pradesh's presence underscores India's growing role in global economic conversations--and the state's ambition to be at the forefront of that journey. Beginning on Monday, Madhya Pradesh will present its compelling growth story, progressive policy framework.



ADANI SOLAR ONLY INDIAN COMPANY IN WOOD MACKENZIE'S GLOBAL TOP 10 RANKING SOLAR PANEL COMPANIES

Diary Times Desk : India's growing stature in global clean energy manufacturing has received a boost with Adani Solar emerging as the only Indian company to feature in Wood Mackenzie's Global Solar Module Manufacturer Ranking for the first half of 2025. Adani Solar, the solar photovoltaic manufacturing arm of Adani New Industries Limited (ANIL), was assigned a Grade A classification by the global energy and natural resources consultancy. It was ranked No.8 on the Wood Mackenzie Global Solar Module Manufacturer Ranking. Wood Mackenzie has released its latest "Global Solar Module Manufacturer Ranking" report for the first half of 2025, which assesses solar panel companies on shipments, bankability and performance. JA Solar and Trinasolar jointly claimed the top rank, with scores of 91.7 and 91.6, respectively, according to the Wood Mackenzie report which evaluated 38 manufacturers of crystalline silicon modules. Adani Solar had a score of 81 points.



INDIA TO GROW AT A
HEALTHY 7% IN 2026-27
DESPITE GLOBAL
UNCERTAINTIES: CAREEDGE

Diary Times Desk : Even with external uncertainties lingering, the Indian economy is expected to record healthy growth of seven per cent in the upcoming financial year 2026-27, CareEdge Ratings has asserted. The growth momentum, according to the rating agency, will be supported by factors such as low inflation, lower interest rates, and a lower tax burden. "While India's merchandise exports have come under pressure amid tariff uncertainties, the healthy services exports are expected to remain supportive of the external position," it said. The Indian economy has demonstrated relative resilience in the current financial year 2025-26, with the GDP growth pegged at 7.4 per cent, as per the First Advance Estimate (FAE) by the government. The growth momentum has been supported by income tax cuts, GST rate rationalisation, continued momentum in services exports, easing inflationary pressures and RBI rate cuts, the rating agency added.

INDIA FOREX RESERVES RISE
\$392 MILLION TO \$687.2
BILLION IN WEEK THAT ENDED
JAN 9

Diary Times Desk : India's foreign exchange reserves rose marginally, by USD 392 million in the week that ended January 9, to USD 687.193 billion, driven by a jump in gold reserves while foreign currency assets dropped, the Reserve Bank of India's latest 'Weekly Statistical Supplement' data showed. This followed a sharp drop in the previous week. Over the past few weeks, the forex kitty has been largely in an uptrend, barring exceptions. The country's foreign exchange (forex) kitty has been hovering close to its all-time high of USD 704.89 billion, reached in September 2024. For the reported week (that ended January 9), India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of foreign exchange reserves, stood at USD 550.866 billion, down USD 1.124 billion. The RBI data showed that gold reserves currently stand at USD 112.830 billion, up USD 1.568 billion from the previous week. The price of the safe-haven asset gold has been on a sharp uptrend over recent months.

POWER DISTRIBUTION COS RECORD POSITIVE PAT AFTER YEARS OF
LOSSES: MINISTER MANOHAR LAL

Diary Times Desk : The country's power distribution utilities (DISCOMs and power departments) have collectively recorded a positive Profit After Tax (PAT) of Rs 2,701 crore in the year 2024-25, marking a significant turning point for the sector, Manohar Lal, Union Minister of Power, said. The distribution utilities as a whole have been reporting PAT losses for the past several years since the unbundling and corporatisation of State Electricity Boards. As per a statement from the Ministry of Power, the positive PAT of Rs 2,701 crore returned in 2024-25 compares to a loss of Rs 25,553 crore in 2023-24 and a loss of Rs 67,962 crore in 2013-14. Minister Manohar Lal said this marks a new chapter for the distribution sector and is the result of several steps taken to address its concerns. The Minister said this achievement was possible due to the leadership and vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi captured in his words that, "India is driving not only its growth but also the growth of the world, with the energy sector playing a significant role in this." Manohar Lal said the government is committed to the required reforms in the sector so that the power sector can support our growing economy and play its part in the journey towards Viksit Bharat.



CENTRE LIKELY TO PRIORITISE DEBT CONSOLIDATION, CAPEX PUSH
IN BUDGET 2026: ICRA



Diary Times Desk : The government is likely to prioritise medium-term debt consolidation while sustaining a strong push for capital expenditure in the upcoming Union Budget for 2026-27, according to pre-Budget expectations outlined by rating agency ICRA. The upcoming budget assumes significance, as it will be the first to align with the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission, which will determine fiscal transfers between the Centre and states for the next five years, the rating agency has asserted. ICRA expects the Centre's fiscal deficit to be capped at around 4.3 per cent of GDP in 2026-27, marginally lower than the 4.4 per cent budgeted for 2025-26, supported by an estimated 9.8 per cent growth in nominal GDP. Based on this trajectory, the central government's debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to decline from 56.1 per cent in 2025-26 to about 55.1 per cent in 2026-27, consistent with the medium-term consolidation path. Despite the marginal improvement in the deficit ratio, the absolute fiscal deficit is projected to rise to Rs 16.9 trillion in 2026-27, compared with Rs 15.7 trillion in 2025-26. This increase is expected to be driven largely by higher capital expenditure, as the government seeks to front-load infrastructure spending before fiscal rigidities intensify from 2027-28 onwards due to the anticipated implementation of the 8th Central Pay Commission, which will raise salary and pension liabilities, it said. "We believe that the GoI will push up capital expenditure by Rs 14% (to Rs. 13.1 trillion), before fiscal rigidities in the form of higher committed expenditure set in from FY2028 on account of the 8th Central Pay Commission (CPC) recommendations on salary/pension revisions for Central Government employees/pensioners," ICRA said. ICRA projects that capital expenditure will be increased by around 14 per cent to Rs 13.1 trillion in 2026-27, equivalent to 3.3 per cent of GDP, up from an estimated Rs 11.5 trillion in 2025-26.

**COLD WAVE IN NORTH INDIA:
J-K'S SONAMARG FREEZES AT
-8.9°C, LIGHT SNOW IN
HIMACHAL**

Diary Times Desk : Cold wave conditions prevailed in the northern parts of the country, with the minimum temperatures plunging across Kashmir and Punjab's Amritsar shivering at a low of 1.7 degrees Celsius on Sunday. Two men, including a truck driver, were burned to death following a multi-vehicle pileup on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway in Haryana's Nuh on Sunday morning amid dense fog, police said. The accident caused a long traffic jam and severely disrupted traffic on the expressway, they said. In Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district, a pile-up involving at least 20 vehicles on the Delhi-Lucknow National Highway amid dense fog on Sunday morning left a person dead and at least 24 injured, police said. Sonamarg in Jammu and Kashmir was the coldest place in the Valley, recording a low of minus 8.9 degrees Celsius, officials said on Sunday. Srinagar recorded a low of minus 4.7 degrees Celsius. The meteorological department has forecast spells of wet weather, especially in the higher reaches of the Valley over the next few days. Shopian in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 6.7 degrees Celsius, while Pahalgam recorded a minimum temperature of minus 6 degrees Celsius.

NHAI WIDENING WORK DELAYS DERAIL PINJORE- NALAGARH TRAFFIC

Diary Times Desk : Despite the daily ordeal faced by residents and industrial commuters on the dilapidated, potholed and fissure-prone Pinjore-Baddi Nalagarh highway, prolonged indecision by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has left users increasingly frustrated.

The authority's inordinate delay in inviting fresh bids after the abandonment of the project has effectively pushed the region's lifeline to the brink. The four-laning project has been limping since Gujarat-based Patel Infrastructure Limited abandoned the work midway in June last year, after completing only about 45 per cent of the project over a period of 39 months. Instead of expeditiously re-tendering the remaining work, NHAI officials have repeatedly deferred the process, citing the pending approval of a revised estimate by the executive committee.

HIMACHAL: LIGHT SNOWFALL IN HIGHER HILLS; HEAVY SNOWFALL EXPECTED FROM JAN 22

Diary Times Desk : Light snowfall persisted in isolated places of the higher hills of Himachal Pradesh, leading to a cold wave situation in many places of the state. The Shimla meteorological office on Sunday said light snowfall occurred in the tribal district of Lahaul and Spiti's Koksar and Hansa villages, while the weather remained dry in most parts of the state. Cold wave was also witnessed in Hamirpur, Una and Mandi, which recorded 2.1°C, 2.7°C and 3.9°C minimum temperatures, respectively. The weather office has also predicted that light snowfall would continue to occur in the higher reaches of the state till January 20, while the weather in the rest of the state would continue to remain dry. "A fresh Western Disturbance is likely to affect Northwest India from January 21 due to which the state will receive a few heavy spells of snowfall and rain in higher and middle hills. A yellow warning of heavy snow and rain in higher hills has also been issued for January 23. Also, lower hills and plains will also witness light precipitation from January 22 onwards" said the MeT forecast.



TWO JHUGGIS GUTTED IN FIRE AT SCRAP YARD IN BADDI

Diary Times Desk : A fire broke out at a scrap yard in Baddi on Sunday morning, allegedly due to negligently stored inflammable material, gutting two jhuggis at Suraj Majra village. While the exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, such incidents linked to unsafe dumping of inflammable scrap have become increasingly frequent in the industrial belt. Thick black plumes of smoke were seen billowing from the site as the inflammable material intensified the blaze, triggering panic among nearby residents. Fire personnel rushed to the spot around 11.30 am with three fire tenders and a team of eight personnel, said Santosh Sharma, Commandant Home Guards, Solan, who oversees firefighting operations in the area. It took nearly three hours to bring the blaze under control. Two jhuggis were completely gutted, resulting in losses estimated at around Rs 1 lakh, while goods worth approximately Rs 50,000 were saved due to the timely action of the firemen. No injuries were reported. The police registered an FIR under Sections 125 and 287 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), pertaining to acts endangering human life and negligent conduct with fire. The case was registered on the complaint of a local resident, who alleged negligence on the part of the scrap dealer in storing inflammable material.

SUKHU DEMANDS BAN ON APPLE IMPORTS DURING PEAK SEASON

Diary Times Desk : CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has strongly pleaded for a complete ban on apple imports during the peak apple season from July to November, citing serious concerns over the impact on Himachal's apple economy. Sukhu called on Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal in New Delhi late last evening. He also urged the Centre to raise the import duty on apples to 100 per cent during the remaining months to discourage imports, which he said were adversely affecting the state's Rs 4,500-crore apple economy. Seeking the Centre's intervention, the CM said the proposed measures were necessary to protect the interests of nearly 2.5 lakh farmers engaged in apple cultivation in the state. He pointed out that apples account for around 80 per cent of Himachal Pradesh's total fruit production. Sukhu apprised the Union Minister of the growing concerns among apple growers over the reduction in import duty on apples. He said apple imports had increased nearly two-and-a-half times over the past 10 years and were likely to rise further due to free trade agreements. "The seasonal window for the import of New Zealand apples is between April and August with a 25 per cent tariff, while for the remaining months the earlier 50 per cent duty continues to apply," he stated.

YOUR HOROSCOPE
19-01-2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MOGA TEACHER COUPLE'S DEATH: PROTESTORS CLASH WITH POLICE; DEMAND RS 4 CR COMPENSATION FROM STATE GOVT FOR ORPHANED KIDS

Diary Times Desk : A clash broke out between protesting teachers and the police today after security personnel attempted to disperse a massive state-level demonstration, organised by teachers' unions in Moga. Despite police efforts, protesters managed to block the Ferozepur-Ludhiana national highway for many hours, causing major traffic disruption. The protest was organised Grain Market, Moga, by various teachers' unions from across Punjab, supported by farmer unions, to demand enhanced compensation and rehabilitation for the family of a teacher couple who died in a road accident while on election duty. The deceased, Jas Karan Singh and Kamalpreet Kaur, were travelling on December 14 for Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad election duty when they met with a fatal road accident due to dense fog. The tragedy left behind two minor children. Following the incident, the family and teachers' unions demanded full educational expenses for both children, one government job for a family member and Rs 4 crore as compensation.

RS 10-CR/KM MOHALI ROAD PROJECT: KHAIRA SLAMS AAP GOVT, CALLS IT 'DAYLIGHT ROBBERY'

Diary Times Desk : Senior Congress leader and MLA from Bholath, Sukhpal Singh Khaira, today strongly condemned the Bhagwant Mann-led Aam Aadmi Party government for what he termed an 'unprecedented and shocking loot' of Punjab's resources through a scandalous road maintenance project cleared by the Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA). Referring to a detailed newspaper report published in The Tribune, Khaira pointed out that GMADA has invited bids to hand over the maintenance, resurfacing and beautification of 83 kilometres of Mohali roads to private players for a period of 10 years, at a staggering cost of Rs 10 crore per kilometre, pushing the total project cost to nearly Rs 1,000 crore. "This is the first time in Punjab's history that routine road maintenance is being outsourced at such obscene and unjustifiable rates. Charging Rs 10 crore per kilometre for maintaining existing roads is nothing short of daylight.

MISSING SAROOPS ROW: SETBACK FOR AAP AS BANGA MLA SUKHI RELINQUISHES CABINET RANK

Diary Times Desk : Amidst the raging controversy in the state regarding the 328 missing saroops of Shri Guru Granth Sahib, the Aam Admi Party has suffered a major setback in Doaba. Banga MLA Dr Sukhwinder Singh Sukhi today announced his resignation from his cabinet rank and post of Chairman, Punjab State Warehousing Corporation. He made the declaration formally in a Facebook post today. The move comes days after the CM Bhagwant Mann announced that 169 of the missing 328 saroops had been found from a religious site in Banga, at Nawanshahr. Speaking from the religious site of Rasokhana Sri Nabh Kanwal Raja, the place at the centre of the controversy, Sukhi said, "This site is not a place for politics for me." Sukhi announced, "I resign from the rank and status of the Cabinet ministry and the position of chairman, bestowed on me by the state government. And I pray to God to grant me power that I may tell the truth to CM Bhagwant Mann and AAP leadership and help remove the misgivings (surrounding the issue)."



COMMAND HOSPITAL IN HARYANA'S PANCHKULA GETS COAS CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

Diary Times Desk : Command Hospital, Chandimandir, under the Army's Western Command, has been awarded the prestigious Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Unit Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of its professionalism, dedication and excellence in military healthcare delivery. The accolade follows the hospital's recent achievement of securing second position in the Raksha Mantri Trophy Evaluation of Armed Forces Hospitals for 2024-25. The COAS Unit Certificate of Appreciation was awarded at the Army Day Investiture Ceremony held at Jaipur on January 14, an official statement said here on Sunday. Under the leadership of Lt Gen Manoj Kumar Katiyar, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Command, the hospital, located in Haryana's Panchkula, has witnessed significant capability enhancement aimed at strengthening advanced patient care, the statement said. Key milestones include the operationalisation of the bone marrow transplant programme, establishment of a state-of-the-art Haematology Ward, recognition as the best emerging National Organ Transplant and Retrieval Centre by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in August 2024, and accreditation as a kidney transplant centre.

2 KILLED AS MULTI-VEHICLE PILE-UP SPARKS FIRE ON KUNDLI-MANESAR-PALWAL EXPRESSWAY

Diary Times Desk : A major road accident on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway in Haryana's Tawadu subdivision claimed two lives on Sunday morning, officials said. The collision occurred near the Mohammadpur Ahir police station area when a vehicle suddenly applied its brakes between the villages of Sabras and Gudhi, causing a multi-vehicle collision involving five vehicles, including a large gravel-loaded dump truck and a container truck. The impact was so severe that both the dump truck and container truck caught fire, trapping the driver and cleaner inside. Both were burned to death on the spot, and their identities could not be confirmed as their bodies were completely charred. The accident caused a massive traffic jam, drawing large crowds of local residents. Police teams arrived at the scene and, with the help of three fire tenders, managed to bring the blaze under control after nearly two hours. Traffic was fully restored three hours later. Eyewitnesses and local truck drivers told police that two vehicles fled the scene, which led to the subsequent collisions. Mohammadpur Ahir police station in-charge said efforts are underway.

CM SAINI RELEASES RS 858 CRORE FOR FLAGSHIP WELFARE SCHEMES



Diary Times Desk : CM Nayab Singh Saini digitally released a total of Rs 858 crore under multiple flagship welfare schemes, reinforcing the government's commitment to women empowerment, agricultural sustainability and household welfare. During a press conference here today, Saini said providing financial assistance to these initiatives reflects a holistic approach to development, aimed at strengthening social security and improving the quality of life of citizens. Reaffirming that farmers remain at the core of government policies, the CM said sustained efforts were being made to make agriculture a profitable and future-ready sector so that farmers' children remain connected to the profession. To support farmers at every stage, from seed to market, the government has released a total of Rs 659 crore as grants and incentives under five agriculture-related schemes, he added. Under the Crop Residue Management Scheme, a total of Rs 461.75 crore has been distributed to 5,54,405 farmers who did not burn any crop residue. As subsidy, Rs 85.10 crore has been released for 9,885 crop residue management machines provided to farmers. As incentive to 31,605 farmers adopting Direct Seeding of Rice, Rs 75.54 crore has been provided, while a sum of Rs 15.75 crore has been received by 13,500 farmers under the Mera Pani - Meri Virasat scheme for the Kharif season 2025-26. Under the Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana, Rs 20 crore has been sent as price difference compensation to 4,073 farmers engaged in potato and cauliflower cultivation.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Australia's About To Find Out

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

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



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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INFA

A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

But it is difficult to bury the past entirely.

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

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

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

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

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

A blue school bag

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



DRIVE THE DREAM: FIVE THRILLING CARS FROM GOODING CHRISTIE’S FIRST AUCTION IN EUROPE

Diary Times Desk : Drawn by the allure of high-octane thrills and classic designs, car enthusiasts from across the world gather each year in Paris for Rétromobile, Europe’s leading indoor automotive show. This year, for its 50th anniversary, Gooding Christie’s has become the show’s official partner, and on 29 January will hold its first auction of collector cars on the continent. ‘Rétromobile is essentially Art Basel for the car world,’ explains Rupert Banner, senior specialist and head of sale at Gooding Christie’s in New York. ‘It’s a wonderful convergence of manufacturers, dealers, restorers, collectors and enthusiasts.’

Gooding Christie’s was formed at the beginning of 2025, after Christie’s acquired the leading car auction house Gooding & Company to bridge the worlds of art, luxury and collector cars. ‘At the top end, the markets are becoming more intertwined, and fine cars are going from strength to strength,’ says Banner. The first Gooding Christie’s sale took place in March 2025 at Amelia Island in Florida, and realised more than \$67 million. The top lot was a 1955 Ferrari 375 MM Berlinetta, which made \$9,465,000.

The following August, at Pebble Beach in California, a second auction realised over \$128 million. The top lot, a 1961 Ferrari 250 GT SWB California Spider Competizione made \$25.3 million, setting a new world record at auction for the California Spider model, and becoming the most valuable car ever to be auctioned by Gooding Christie’s since inception. By the end of the year, the prices achieved by Gooding Christie’s had broken more than a dozen world records. What does Banner suggest are the most important things for newcomers to the category to consider? ‘As with art, watches or wine, collectors prize rarity, provenance and condition. Then there are factors like mileage and exhibition history to take into account. We’re also seeing a growth in nostalgic cars from the 1980s and 1990s – the sorts of machines people had posters of on their bedroom walls as teenagers.’ The upcoming sale includes 85 cars, spanning 120 years of automotive history, from iconic pieces of early-20th-century design to cutting-edge, track-only hypercars. Here, Banner outlines five of his favourites. In 1985, a Sicilian doctor named Vincenzo Garraffa placed an order with Ferrari’s official dealership in Rome for a 288 GTO – a new, landmark car designed to deliver competition-level performance in a form suited to the road. The model had been announced by Enzo Ferrari in 1983, then unveiled at the following year’s Geneva Motor Show. Internally, it was the first Ferrari to feature a twin-turbo engine, which delivered previously unseen levels of exhilarating power. Externally, its appearance was radically aggressive: flared arches, aerodynamic ducting and a distinctive rear grille were sculpted from Kevlar and carbon fibre and styled by Pininfarina.



COLLECTING GUIDE: THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Diary Times Desk :

When collecting ancient objects, it is often the history that speaks to us. Whether it is from one, two, three thousand years ago, it carries with it a long-forgotten tale. The societies that made up the ancient Near East, beginning with the Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia, which dates back to more than 5,000 years ago, produced the first written language – a system of writing consisting of wedge-shaped characters we call cuneiform (coming from the Latin word *cuneus* for wedge).

From massive stone wall panels to more intimate gold images of deities, there is much more than meets the eye when looking this deep into the past. Near Eastern art refers to works created in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Levant, as well as the South Arabian peninsula, Iran and Afghanistan, from the 6th millennium BC until the Arab conquest in the 7th century AD. In present-day terms, this is the area bounded by the Mediterranean sea to the West, Turkey to the North, Afghanistan in the East and Yemen in the South.

Perhaps the most typical type of objects that one sees on today’s art market are stamp and cylinder seals. These had figural scenes engraved onto their surfaces that were designed to be viewed in relief once the seal was pressed or rolled into clay. Stamp seals appeared first, with the earliest examples dating to the 6th millennium BC, while cylinder seals emerged a bit later, during the second half of the 4th millennium BC, around when cuneiform writing was developed. The usage of cylinder seals was a direct response to the needs of a growing bureaucracy that was increasingly involved with long-distance trade. Many of them are of the highest artistic quality, illustrating mythological subjects and often accompanied by cuneiform inscriptions identifying the owner. They can be carved from colourful stones such as jasper, chalcedony, agate, hematite and limestone, while less common examples are made from shell, bronze and frit. Another class of object encountered on today’s market are cuneiform tablets, typically in clay but copper, stone and even gold examples are known. Most clay tablets are humble documents that focus on an aspect of the detailed administrative functions of daily life, such as the number of livestock brought to temples, allotments of agricultural fields, and crop harvests. More elaborate tablets, cylinders or barrels can record political and diplomatic letters sent by rulers to their counterparts, mythological stories such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, or the exploits and lineages of a king.



ENGLISH INTERNATIONAL FACES A LITMUS TEST AGAINST REAL SOCIEDAD AS BARCELONA CONSIDER €30 MILLION MOVE



Diary Times Desk : As Barcelona gear up for the away match against Real Sociedad this evening, one of the players who will be in focus is Marcus Rashford. After joining Barça on a season-long loan deal, Rashford's future has been up in the air, especially with the club having the option to activate a buyout clause worth €30 million. The forward has done well at Camp Nou so far, racking up 7 goals and 11 assists in all competitions – making him one of the most productive attackers at the club. A recent report from Diario SPORT points out that Barcelona are extremely pleased with Rashford's progress. The English international has impressed onlookers with his commitment levels and desire to do well for the club. Rashford has also integrated very quickly, building a solid bond with his teammates in a matter of months. All of this is coupled with his impressive tally.

OFFICIAL: BARCELONA SQUAD LIST TO FACE REAL SOCIEDAD | CANCELO IN, RAPHINHA OUT

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona have released their official squad as they take on Real Sociedad at the Riyadh Arena later this evening.

The Catalans are coming on the back of an 11-game winning streak that saw Hansi Flick match the record held by Luis Enrique.

Another win, therefore, could see him overtake Enrique and move a step closer to matching Frank Rijkaard's all-time record of 18 wins in a row. Heading into this game, though, Barcelona have confirmed that Raphinha will be missing out. The Brazilian has not been included in the squad to face Sociedad, which could be a potential blow for the visiting side.

Meanwhile, new signing Joao Cancelo has been included in the squad for the first time and is in contention for a start against Sociedad. There are not many changes elsewhere, with Marcus Rashford and Rooney Bardghji in focus, in the absence of Raphinha. Ronald Araujo makes the squad as well, though it remains to be seen whether or not the Uruguayan international will find himself in the starting eleven.

POSSIBLE QUARTERFINAL OPPONENTS FOR BARCELONA AFTER COPA DEL REY WIN OVER RACING SANTANDER

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona were able to extend their winning run to 11 matches in all competitions, thanks to a victory over Racing Santander in the Copa Del Rey.

The Catalans have now reached the quarterfinal stage of the competition, with the draw set for Monday.

Although Real Madrid's surprise exit will serve as a relief for the Blaugrana, the club could still face a host of tough opponents who are still alive in the competition. Unlike the previous rounds, where the four Super Cup participants were protected and paired against lower-tier opposition, the quarterfinals bring a change in format.

This time, it will be a practically pure draw. The only condition remaining is that Albacete, the lowest-ranked team left is guaranteed to play at home. For all other matchups, the order of the draw will determine the host.

Hansi Flick's side, therefore, has an equal probability of facing any of the seven other surviving teams.

BARÇA ATHLETIC COACH REACTS AS YOUTH PRODIGY CLOSES IN ON PSG MOVE – “MANY OPTIONS HERE”

Diary Times Desk : Pedro Fernandez Dro's decision to leave Barcelona this week has come as a huge shock for the club, who were devastated to lose out on one of their star talents.

Dro has made the decision after failing to get into the first team, with reports suggesting that he is closing in on a move to Paris Saint-Germain.

The decision hasn't gone down well with Barcelona's management, and especially Hansi Flick, who made his disappointment known in public. However, Dro's decision hasn't had a great impact on Barça Athletic coach Juliano Belletti, who pointed out that La Masia has many other talents it can count on.

Speaking after the game against Andrax, Belletti was asked about Dro's imminent departure, to which he confirmed that the player hadn't informed him of his desire to leave the club.

“He has not communicated anything to me; I have found out from my staff, who have told me before. There are a lot of good players here. I think the club, especially at the moment, is very good in this sense,” Belletti said after the game (h/t Diario SPORT).

OFFICIAL: BARCELONA CONFIRM WHY BRAZILIAN INTERNATIONAL IS OUT OF SQUAD VS SOCIEDAD

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona will look to reclaim their four-point lead at the top of the league table as they take on Real Sociedad at the Riyadh Arena this evening.

The big headline heading into this encounter is the absence of Raphinha. The Brazilian international has been left out of the squad list announced by Barça heading into today's game.

The Catalans, though, have also confirmed why Raphinha will be missing out on tonight's game. The club have released an official note regarding Raphinha's fitness, suggesting that the Brazilian misses out on tonight's encounter due to precaution. Barcelona have further confirmed that Raphinha is suffering a knock to his right thigh, likely resulting in a dead leg. As a result, he has not been included in tonight's squad. “First team player Raphinha sits out the game against Real Sociedad as a precaution due to a knock to the right thigh,” Barcelona have confirmed through a post on social media.

BARCELONA CONTINUE TO FACE DELAYS ON TWO FRONTS IN CAMP NOU WORKS

Diary Times Desk : Since returning to the Spotify Camp Nou, FC Barcelona has been operating with a restricted capacity of 45,000 spectators while construction continues. The club are eager to increase attendance, but fresh reports indicate that bureaucratic hurdles are delaying two specific permissions needed to expand the stadium's capacity. As reported by Diario SPORT, the first delay concerns the First Occupation license for Phase 1C, which is required to open the first and second tiers of the Gol Nord. The club had initially targeted the match against Real Oviedo on January 25 for this opening, but that deadline will be missed. Due to demands from the Barcelona City Council regarding access routes to the zone, the club now expects this license to arrive between the middle and the end of February, which falls in line with what was reported earlier. The second delay involves the new Espai d'Animació, which will be located in the first tier of the Gol Sud with a capacity of 1,200. This section, to be renamed Gol 1957, will be comprised of fans aged 18 to 30 chosen from the season ticket waiting list.

