

## NEWS IN BRIEF

ED CONDUCTS  
SEARCHES AT  
NIGHTCLUB OWNERS  
LUTHRA BROTHERS'  
PREMISES IN DELHI  
AND GOA

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The searches are being conducted at five premises in Delhi and three in Goa. They are the owners of Birch by Romeo Lane, where the fire had erupted on December 6 last year.

The Luthra brothers, who had fled to Thailand within hours of the fire, were arrested by Goa Police at the immigration counter of the Delhi airport on December 17, after being deported from Bangkok.

Their Indian passports had earlier been suspended, and they were deported on emergency certificates, a one-way travel document issued by the Indian embassy in Thailand.

## BANK UNIONS TO GO ON NATIONWIDE STRIKE ON JANUARY 27 TO PRESS FOR 5-DAY WORK WEEK

**Diary Times Desk :** Bank employee unions have decided to go on a nationwide strike on January 27 to press for a long-pending demand for a five-day work week.

If the strike proceeds, it will disrupt public sector banking operations for three consecutive days, with January 25 and 26 being holidays.

Most of the public sector banks have already informed their customers about the disruption in banking services if the strike materialises.

In response to the strike notice served by the UFBU, the Chief Labour Commissioner held a conciliation meeting on Wednesday and Thursday, the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella organisation of nine unions of officers and employees, said in a statement.

"Besides representatives of IBA and various Banks, representatives of DFS, the Ministry of Finance, were present. From UFBU, all our 9 unions were present."

## PM MODI NEWS

### 'DMK IS CMC GOVT — CORRUPTION, MAFIA, CRIME': PM MODI AT RALLY IN TAMIL NADU



**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday kick-started NDA's 2026 election campaign in Tamil Nadu, mounting a spirited attack on the ruling DMK on issues, including corruption and coined an abbreviation — CMC — to lash out at the Dravidian party. According to the PM, CMC means "Corruption, Mafia, Crime."

"DMK is CMC — a Corruption, Mafia, Crime promoting government. The people of Tamil Nadu have made up their mind to uproot DMK, CMC," he said at the massive gathering comprising of public and cadres from NDA constituents, including AIADMK, AMMK and PMK (Anbumani faction).

In his maiden visit to Tamil Nadu in the poll year, the PM's rally turned out to be a show of strength with top leaders from the key alliance parties — AIADMK chief and Leader of Opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami, Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) chief TTV Dhinakaran, PMK's Dr Anbumani Ramadoss, TMC-M leader GK Vasan and many others in attendance. Continuing his attack against DMK, Modi said the party-led government's "countdown has started".

Tamil Nadu wants to be free of DMK's "misgovernance", and was looking forward to BJP-NDA's good governance, he said. Lashing out at DMK over the Thirupparankundram Lord Murugan Temple Karthigai lamp lighting row, he said that while "our leaders stood by devotees' rights, DMK left no stone unturned for vote bank politics". The party did not even spare the court. Further, dynasty, corruption, abusing women and our culture are the "routes" for one's growth in the Dravidian party, he alleged. The DMK government has nothing to do with democracy and accountability and "functions for only one family", he said. Even a child in the state knows how much corruption was happening and whose pockets the money reaches. "We have to free TN from the clutches of DMK," he said, and batted for a "double engine" government in the state that walks "shoulder to shoulder" with the Centre for Tamil Nadu's growth and progress.

### SNOWFALL IN HIGH-ALTITUDE AREAS OF UTTARAKHAND, RAIN IN PLAINS; ORANGE ALERT ISSUED

**Diary Times Desk :** High-altitude areas of Uttarakhand received the first snowfall of the year on Friday, marking the end of a prolonged dry spell and intensifying the cold wave across the state.

Most low-lying areas and plains, including the capital Dehradun, have experienced steady rainfall since morning. The fresh snowfall has covered Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Auli, Mussoorie, Chakrata, Dhanaulti, and Uttarkashi in a thick layer of white.

The change in weather has drawn tourists to various spots, including the Mall Road and other spots in Mussoorie, with many posting videos of the snowfall on social media. Apple growers and other horticulturists, who had been waiting for the precipitation, also welcomed the snowfall.

The Meteorological Department has issued an 'Orange Alert' for the state, predicting further snowfall in the mountains and rain in the lower regions. There is also a forecast of hailstorms accompanied by strong winds in some locations.



### SC SEEKS STATUS REPORTS FROM CBI, ED ON PIL ALLEGING BANKING FRAUD BY ANIL DHIRUBHAI AMBANI GROUP



**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Friday issued fresh notices to industrialist Anil Ambani and Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG) on a PIL seeking a court-monitored probe into alleged large-scale banking and corporate fraud involving the group and its associate entities.

A bench led by CJ Surya Kant directed CBI and ED to file status reports in sealed covers in 10 days on the progress of their respective probe into the alleged fraud.

On November 18, 2025, the top court had issued notices to the Centre, CBI, ED, Anil Ambani, and ADAG on a PIL filed by former Union Power Secretary EAS Sarma. Noting that Ambani and ADAG had not responded yet, the apex court said this would be their final opportunity to respond to the petition. Directing the Bombay High Court Registrar General to ensure proper service of notice on Ambani and ADAG and to file a compliance report, the top court petitioned the matter for further hearing after 10 days. Petitioner Sarma alleged that ADAG entities were involved in fraudulent diversion of public funds, fabrication of financial statements, and systemic collusion with institutional actors.

### BHUBJAL, 45 OTHERS DISCHARGED IN MONEY LAUNDERING CASE LINKED TO MAHARASHTRA SADAN 'IRREGULARITIES'



**Diary Times Desk :** A special court here on Friday discharged NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal in an alleged money laundering case linked to financial irregularities in construction of 'Maharashtra Sadan' in New Delhi and a housing project in Navi Mumbai.

Special judge Satyanarayan Navander, in his ruling, said the prosecution under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) could not proceed in the absence of a subsisting "predicate offence", which it said is "akin to a tree without roots".

Besides Bhujbal, who is currently the food and civil supplies minister, his son Pankaj, nephew Sameer, former MP Sanjay Kakade, were among the 46 individuals and entities who were cleared from the case by the court.

As per the probe agency, the proceeds of crime in the Maharashtra Sadan case stood at approximately Rs 21 crore, while buyers in the Navi Mumbai residential project were duped to the tune of over Rs 44 crore.

The judge noted that the accused had already been discharged from the predicate offences of corruption and cheating cases being investigated by Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and other probe agencies.

## SIR NEWS

### ASSAM VOTERS MARKED 'SHIFTED', 'DEAD' IN ELECTORAL ROLLS REVISION, EC WARNS AGAINST MISUSE OF FORM 7



**Diary Times Desk :** Faridud Eunush is among six voters in his household in Assam's Morigaon district, but three of them have been shown as having 'shifted' from their address, according to a notice received from authorities during the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls in the state.

Shocked to find their names marked as 'shifted', Eunush and his siblings attended a hearing on Thursday with documents to prove they still reside in Mikirbheta circle of Morigaon Assembly constituency.

"The notice was most shocking. We three were shown as 'shifted', while the rest of the family remained residents of the same address," Eunush said.

"But more concerning was the fact that the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) refused to tell who had filed the complaint against us. He said we would have to file an RTI application to know the complainant's name, which we submitted immediately," he claimed. Like Eunush and his siblings, thousands across the state have reportedly received notices based on applications filed through Form 7, which deals with proposed inclusion or deletion of names from the existing electoral rolls.

### UPSET WITH RAHUL'S 'KOCHE SNUB', THAROOR SKIPS KEY CONGRESS MEET ON KERALA POLLS: SOURCES



**Diary Times Desk :** Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Friday skipped a key strategy meeting of the party for the upcoming Kerala polls as he is believed to be upset over Rahul Gandhi not properly acknowledging his presence at a recent event and repeated attempts by state leaders to "sideline" him. Sources said that while a series of events had led to Tharoor's disappointment with the treatment meted out to him, the tipping point was Gandhi not acknowledging him at the 'Mahi Panchayat' held in Kochi on January 19 to felicitate the local body poll winners. Gandhi acknowledged other senior leaders present on the stage and took their names but did not mention Tharoor, a four-time MP and one of the three Congress Working Committee (CWC) members from the state, who was also on the dais, the sources said. Tharoor's office said he had informed the party of his inability to attend the meeting due to his prior commitments at the Kerala Literature Festival in Kozhikode.

## ED CONDUCTS SEARCHES AT NIGHTCLUB OWNERS LUTHRA BROTHERS' PREMISES IN DELHI AND GOA



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## 'THREE TO FOUR PEOPLE DYING BY SUICIDE IN WEST BENGAL EVERYDAY DUE TO SIR ANXIETY', SAYS CM MAMATA BANERJEE

**Diary Times Desk :** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday claimed that three to four people are dying by suicide every day in the state due to anxiety over the ongoing SIR exercise.

Banerjee, addressing a programme at Red Road on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose, asserted that the Election Commission and the central government must take responsibility for the deaths. "More than 110 people have already died; everyday three to four people are dying by suicide out of SIR anxiety," she said.

The special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is underway in the state ahead of the upcoming assembly polls. Banerjee also accused the BJP of conspiring against Bengal, and claimed that icons of the country like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Bose and B R Ambedkar were being insulted.

## SC NOTICE TO CENTRE, TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT ON PLEA FOR TAKEOVER OF THIRUPPARANKUNDRAM TEMPLE BY ASI

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Friday issued notices to the Centre, the Tamil Nadu Government, Archaeological Survey of India and others on a petition seeking directions on the ASI's takeover of the Thirupparankundram Temple and daily lamp lighting on top of the 'deepathoon' (stone pillar). A Bench of Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice Vipul M Pancholi asked the Union of India, Tamil Nadu Government, ASI and other respondents to respond to the petition filed by the Hindu Dharma Parishad. The petitioner has sought directions that the ASI take control of the Thirupparankundram Lord Murugan Subramaniya Temple at Madurai and on lighting one lamp on top of the 'deepathoon' at all times. The Parishad also sought directions that every year on the day of Karthigai in the month of Karthigai, the entire hill should be lit up with lamps and Muruga devotees should be allowed to perform puja. The Madras High Court had on January 6 upheld a single judge's order allowing the lighting of a lamp on the Thirupparankundram Hill and slammed the DMK Government, calling "ridiculous" its claim.

## UPSET WITH RAHUL'S 'KOCHI SNUB', THAROOR TO SKIP KEY CONGRESS MEETING: SOURCES

**Diary Times Desk :** Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor is set to skip a strategy meeting of the party for the upcoming Kerala polls on Friday as he is upset over Rahul Gandhi not properly acknowledging his presence at a recent event and repeated attempts by state leaders to "sideline" him, sources said on Friday. They said that while a series of events had led to his disappointment with the treatment meted out, the tipping point was Gandhi not acknowledging him at the 'Maha Panchayath' held in Kochi on January 19 to felicitate local body poll winners. Gandhi acknowledged other senior leaders on stage and took their names but did not mention Tharoor, a four-time MP and one of the three CWC members from the state, who was also on the dais, the sources said. Tharoor's office said he has informed the party over his inability to attend the meeting due to his prior commitments at the Kerala Literature Festival in Kozhikode. However, according to sources close to him, he is very upset at the treatment meted out to him by the party especially after differences had been ironed out at the Wayanad meetings on the sidelines of the Lakshya 2026 leadership camp, organised by the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee.

## VICTIM OF BMW ACCIDENT DELIBERATELY TAKEN TO DISTANT HOSPITAL: DELHI POLICE TELLS COURT

**Diary Times Desk :** Navjot Singh, a 52-year-old finance ministry official, who was run over by a speeding BMW near Daula Kuan last September, was deliberately taken to a distant hospital, and the accident occurred because of the driver's fault, the Delhi Police informed a court here. Judicial Magistrate Ankit Garg on Thursday heard the city police's submission while taking cognisance of the chargesheet filed in December last year. The court said, "Inspector Shyoram submits that in the present case, the accident happened due to the fault of the accused (BMW driver Gaganpreet Makkad) and she deliberately took the accused to a distant hospital." "Therefore, she has been charge-sheeted under BNS Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) along with sections 281 (rash driving), 125 B (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 238 A (causing disappearance of evidence)." The court noted the police officer's submissions that a postmortem report had been filed, according to which the victim could have died on the spot or have survived for 5-15 minutes post the accident, as there was "huge blood loss".

## OVER 20 PRIVATE NOIDA SCHOOLS RECEIVE HOAX BOMB THREAT EMAILS

**Diary Times Desk :** Around 20 private schools in Noida received threat emails on Friday, prompting heightened security checks, though the situation remained under control, police said. Senior officers, personnel from various police stations, bomb disposal squads, fire services, dog squads and BDDS (bomb detection and disposal squad) teams rushed to the affected schools. Intensive checks were carried out at the premises of some private institutions, while a cyber team began technical analysis of the emails, according to a police press note. "Situation is normal, and complete peace and order have been ensured at the sites. People are advised not to pay attention to rumours," the police said. Officials said preliminary assessment suggests the threats are non-specific. However, investigations are ongoing to trace the source of the emails and determine intent. Around 20 private schools across Gautam Buddha Nagar district received the threat emails, including one email originating from a foreign address, police said. During the search, no suspicious or objectionable items were found, they said, adding that the situation at all locations.

## OFTEN PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE FOR ME BRANDED AS 'DRAMA'; 'PRE-PLANNED': PM MODI



**Diary Times Desk :** A little boy holding up a portrait he had drawn of Narendra Modi prompted the Prime Minister to remark that such expressions of love from the public are often branded as a "drama" or "pre-planned" by his detractors. While addressing a massive gathering of party workers and supporters at the Putharikandam Maidan in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday, Modi said many times when he visits various places in the country, young people express their affection or feelings for him through such methods. However, later, reels are made which term such instances as "pre-planned or drama". "I take all such insults because I understand the love you have for me. I understand the feelings of these kids. So, I will accept the insults of those making the reels, but if a kid has put in love and effort to make something like this, I cannot insult that child. I cannot disappoint them."

## 'GOVT'S POSITIVE REFORMS TRANSFORM INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH': VAISHNAW AT DAVOS

**Diary Times Desk :** Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics & Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav said India's reform momentum has transformed the country's economy into a high-growth, resilient and globally trusted destination. At the World Economic Forum 2026 in Davos, Vaishnav said India has undertaken landmark reforms in recent years, including labour code reforms, simplification of the goods and services tax, reforms in the energy sector and opening up of nuclear energy to the private sector, which are generating strong investor confidence across sectors. He cited several instances, including IKEA announcing plans to double its investment and Qualcomm significantly expanding its workforce in India. He said India is today the fastest-growing major economy in the world, with a consistent growth trajectory of 6-8 per cent projected over the next five years. Commenting on the on global uncertainties.

## SNOW IN HIMACHAL, J-K AND RAIN IN PUNJAB, HARYANA INTENSIFY COLD IN REGION

**Diary Times Desk :** Snow in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir and widespread rain in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi on Friday morning intensified cold wave in the region. Himachal witnessed the first widespread snow of the season, ending a prolonged dry period of nearly four months. Higher regions of Shimla district, including Chopal, Rampur, Narkanda, Khadapathar and Kufri, have been receiving snow since morning. Road connectivity in the upper reaches of Kullu and Lahaul-Spiti was disrupted due to heavy snow. Vehicular movement was affected on key routes, including the Manali-Leh highway, Darcha-Shinkula road, and the road between Tandi and Kadu Nala. Mild snow was reported from Manali, Dagsai and Chail, while lower regions received rain.



## UNABLE TO WRITE NUMBERS TILL 50, FOUR-YEAR-OLD GIRL BEATEN TO DEATH BY FATHER IN FARIDABAD

**Diary Times Desk :** In a shocking incident, a four-and-a-half-year-old girl was beaten to death by her father in Jharsentali village of Faridabad after she was unable to write numbers up to 50. The accused, identified as Krishna Jaiswal, 31, was arrested and produced in a city court on Friday. He was sent to a one-day police remand. According to the police, the accused, a native of Kheratiya village in Sonbhadra district, Uttar Pradesh, lived as a tenant with his family in Jharsentali. During the investigation, police found that Krishna and his wife were employed at a private company in Faridabad. While his wife worked during the day, Krishna worked night shifts. He stayed home during the day to care for their children and homeschooled his daughter. Police said the incident occurred on January 21, when the accused asked his daughter to write numbers up to 50. When she was unable to do so, he got angry and beat his daughter to death. Later in the evening, when his wife reached home.

## VENUGOPAL WRITES TO AMIT SHAH OVER 'PUBLIC LYNCHING' OF PASTOR IN ODISHA, SEEKS ARRESTS

**Diary Times Desk :** Congress general secretary and Lok Sabha MP K C Venugopal on Friday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, expressing "deep shock" over what he described as a "despicable and barbaric" mob attack on a Christian pastor and members of the Christian community in Odisha's Dhenkanal district earlier this month. Venugopal urged immediate arrests and an independent inquiry into the incident. In his letter, he referred to the assault on Pastor Bipin Bihari Naik in Parjang village on January 4, when a mob of around 40 people allegedly surrounded the pastor's house while he was conducting Sunday prayers with his family and seven Christian families. The mob, reportedly comprising Bajrang Dal activists, allegedly assaulted those present and detained the pastor. Venugopal said the pastor was severely beaten, publicly humiliated, and paraded, with his face smeared with sindoor and a garland of sandals placed around his neck.

## KAMALA HARRIS 'OUTRAGED' AFTER 5-YEAR-OLD CHILD DETAINED BY US IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES



**Diary Times Desk :** Former US Vice President Kamala Harris came down sharply against the American Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after a five-year-old child was taken to a detention centre in Texas. In a post on X, Harris said that the child should be at home with the family and "not used as bait by ICE and held in a Texas detention center."

Responding to Harris, Tricia McLaughlin who is the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security said that ICE did not use the child as a bait and in a post on X said that the ICE operation on January 20 was aimed at arresting the father of the child. As per McLaughlin, the father abandoned the child and ICE made several attempts to get the mother of the child to take the custody. She said that the father told ICE officers of wanting the child to remain with him.

"Our officer's made multiple attempts to get the alleged mother who was inside the house to take custody of her child. Officers even assured her she would NOT be taken her into custody. The alleged mother refused to accept custody of the child. The father told officers he wanted the child to remain with him. During this situation, agitators swarmed the scene and began yelling and blowing horns, scaring the child. "Our officers primary concern during the entire operation was the safety and welfare of the child. Following the mother's abandonment of the child, officers abided by the father's wishes to keep the child with him.

## US IMMIGRATION OFFICERS DETAIN 5-YEAR-OLD BOY; SCHOOL SAYS HE WAS USED AS 'BAIT'



**Diary Times Desk :** A five-year-old boy arriving home from preschool in Minnesota was taken by federal agents along with his father to a detention facility in Texas, school officials and the family's lawyer said, making him the fourth student from his Minneapolis suburb to be detained by immigration officers in recent weeks. Federal agents took Liam Conejo Ramos from a running car in the family's driveway on Tuesday afternoon, Columbia Heights Public Schools Superintendent Zena Stenvik told reporters on Wednesday. The officers told him to knock on the door to his home to see if other people were inside, "essentially using a 5-year-old as bait", she said. The father told the child's mother, who was inside the home and has not been named, not to open the door, Stenvik told reporters on Thursday. School officials said the agents wouldn't leave Liam with another adult who lives at the home or an official from the school district. But on Thursday, Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in an online post.

## TRUMP SAYS US 'ARMADA' HEADING TOWARDS IRAN

**Diary Times Desk :** President Donald Trump said on Thursday that the United States has an "armada" heading towards Iran but hoped he would not have to use it as he renewed warnings to Tehran against killing protesters or restarting its nuclear program. US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, say the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided-missile destroyers will arrive in the Middle East in the coming days. One official said additional air-defence systems were also being eyed for the Middle East, which could be critical to guard against any Iranian strike on US bases in the region. The deployments expand the options available to Trump, both to better defend US forces throughout the region at a moment of tensions and to take any additional military action after striking Iranian nuclear sites in June. "We have a lot of ships going that direction, just in case ... I'd rather not see anything happen."

## HASINA ACCUSES YUNUS REGIME OF 'BARTERING' BANGLADESH TO FOREIGN INTERESTS, CALLS FOR OVERTHROW

**Diary Times Desk :** Ousted Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, said on Wednesday that her nation faces the threat of its territory and resources being 'bartered' away to foreign interests and called upon her countrymen to unite and 'overthrow' the interim regime led by Mohammad Yunus. In a possible reference to the US, China, and especially Pakistan, gaining wider acceptance in the Yunus-led regime, Hasina said, "Dangerously, there is a treacherous plot to barter away the territory and resources of Bangladesh to foreign interests." Hasina's recorded audio message in English was played at an event, 'Save Democracy in Bangladesh', in New Delhi on Wednesday evening. She exhorted her countrymen, reminding them about the 'liberation war' of 1971, and added, "Overthrow the foreign-serving puppet regime of Yunus." Hasina, who was ousted following public protests in August 2024, accused her successor and head of the interim government, Mohammad Yunus, of being a "murderous fascist, a money launderer, a plunderer, and a corrupt, power-hungry traitor who has bled our nation dry with his all-consuming paradigms".



## POLICE SEEK MAN WANTED IN FATAL SHOOTINGS OF 3 IN SMALL AUSTRALIAN TOWN

**Diary Times Desk :** Police urged people in a small Australian town to stay indoors on Friday as they looked for the man suspected of killing three people in a domestic violence-related shooting. Julian Ingram, 37, was out on bail after being charged with domestic violence-related crimes, and a restraining order had been issued in December to protect one of the victims in Thursday's shooting, Sophie Quinn, who was 25 and pregnant. The others shot to death in the isolated town of Lake Cargelligo in New South Wales state were Quinn's friend, John Harris, 32, and her aunt, Nerida Quinn, 50. A 19-year-old man who was shot was hospitalised in serious but stable condition. Ingram had a long criminal history, including domestic violence, and police had checked on him multiple times while he was out on bail, state Police Assistant Commissioner Andrew Holland said. "In the time that he has been on bail, he has complied with every condition," he told reporters in Lake Cargelligo.

## 7 INDIAN FISHERMEN ARRESTED BY SRI LANKA NAVY FOR ALLEGED POACHING



**Diary Times Desk :** The Sri Lanka Navy has arrested seven Indian fishermen for allegedly fishing in the island nation's territorial waters. The fishermen were arrested and their two trawlers seized on Tuesday off Kovilai, in the northern Jaffna peninsula, the Navy said in a statement. Those arrested will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspector of Myliddy, Jaffna, for legal proceedings, it said. Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters. The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries. In 2025, the Sri Lankan Navy apprehended 346 Indian fishermen for alleged poaching and seized 44 trawlers, according to the statement.

## PUTIN MEETS TRUMP'S ENVOYS AS KREMLIN SAYS UKRAINE SETTLEMENT HINGES ON TERRITORY

**Diary Times Desk :** Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the settlement in Ukraine with US President Donald Trump's envoys during marathon overnight talks, and the Kremlin insisted that the territorial issue needs to be resolved to reach a peace deal.

The Kremlin meeting, which lasted past 3 am, Friday, came hours after Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky sharply criticised his European allies Thursday for what he cast as their slow and fragmented response to Russia's nearly four-year full-scale invasion that he said has left Ukraine at the mercy of Putin amid an ongoing US push for a peace settlement.

Kremlin foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov, who participated in Putin's meeting with Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, said, "It was reaffirmed that reaching a long-term settlement can't be expected without solving the territorial issue," a reference to Moscow's demand that Kyiv withdraws its troops from the areas in the east that Russia illegally annexed but never fully captured.

Zelensky said after a meeting on Thursday with Trump in Davos, Switzerland, that the future status of land in eastern Ukraine currently occupied by Russia is unresolved but that peace proposals are "nearly ready." On a positive note, Ushakov told reporters that it was agreed that Russian, Ukrainian and US officials will hold talks on security issues related to a prospective peace deal in the United Arab Emirates on Friday.



## FIP AND NIELSEN IQ BOOKDATA ANNOUNCE INDIA BOOK MARKET REPORT EDITION 3

**Diary Times Desk :** The Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP), in collaboration with NielsenIQ BookData, has announced the launch of the India Book Market Report - Edition 3, a comprehensive study aimed at assessing the evolving landscape of India's publishing industry across print, digital and audiobook formats, along with their overall economic contribution. The announcement was made during a media interaction at the New Delhi World Book Fair 2026, where industry stakeholders highlighted the growing need for data-driven insights into the sector. The report is expected to be released between August and September 2026. Speaking at the event, Pranav Gupta, Vice President of the Federation of Indian Publishers, said the third edition marks a significant shift from earlier studies that primarily focused on print publishing.

## BALOCH GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY: BYC FLAGS 'MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ERASURE' OF BALOCH IDENTITY

**Diary Times Desk :** The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) has alleged that the Baloch people are facing a systematic and multi-dimensional genocide that goes far beyond physical violence, marking 25 January as Baloch Genocide Remembrance Day. In a post on X, BYC said genocide is not limited to killings or enforced disappearances but includes the deliberate erasure of culture, education, history, resources, and national identity. According to the organisation, the distortion and occupation of Baloch history and identity amount to a profound form of violence and cruelty. The committee noted that the day serves as a reminder that the struggle is not only about those killed or forcibly disappeared, but about the comprehensive erasure of the Baloch people through various state-driven mechanisms. BYC said this pattern of oppression began with atrocities.

## EU, INDIA TO SEAL MAJOR SECURITY PACT, PUSH FOR FTA BREAKTHROUGH AT LANDMARK SUMMIT

**Diary Times Desk :** In a significant move to bolster ties between two of the world's largest democracies, the European Union (EU) and India are set to unveil a "Security and Defence Strategic Partnership" and are closing in on a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) during the upcoming summit, EU official confirmed. Terming the current period as a "culmination of remarkable intensifying relations," the official noted that both sides now recognize that their security and prosperity are fundamentally linked in a shifting global landscape. A key deliverable of the summit will be the signing of the Security and Defence Partnership by the EU's HRVP Kaja Kallas and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. This marks only the third such comprehensive agreement the EU has signed in Asia, following Japan and the Republic of Korea. The official stated that this partnership is a precondition to make joint production easier, noting that on certain defence-related orders in Europe, cooperation with India will be smoother than in the past. Additionally, the two sides will launch negotiations for a Security and Intelligence Sharing Agreement to build resilience and reduce vulnerabilities.



## PAK'S HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER IMAAN ZAINAB AND HUSBAND HADI ALI ARRESTED IN ISLAMABAD

**Diary Times Desk :** Pakistan's prominent human rights lawyer Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband, lawyer Hadi Ali Chattha, were arrested on Friday while they were heading to a court in Islamabad.

The couple was going to appear in the Additional District and Sessions Court in the controversial tweets case, in which Judge Mohammad Afzal Majoka had issued arrest warrants on January 16.

Mazari-Hazir's mother, Dr Shireen Mazari, who was human rights minister in the government of Imran Khan, confirmed the arrest, saying that her daughter and son-in-law "have been arrested, put in separate cars, and taken away to unknown locations." "Fascism at its peak. Emasculated men in power must be so pleased with this achievement!" Mazari added in a post on X.

Mazari also shared videos showing police vehicles trailing the lawyers' car, with officers stopping the vehicle and opening its doors. In a separate post, Mazari claimed that the police "used violence on the bar leaders, [including] breaking the windows of the car, etc."

## DEFIANT BANGLADESH WON'T VISIT INDIA, SEEK ICC RELIEF

**Diary Times Desk :** The Bangladesh cricket team on Thursday put the ball in the International Cricket Council's court regarding its participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup after it refused to travel to India over security reasons. Bangladesh's security threat claim was rejected by the ICC on Wednesday. The ICC, after a board meeting, had announced that the tournament schedule would not be changed as "altering the schedule under the circumstances, in the absence of any credible security threat, could set a precedent that would jeopardise the sanctity of future ICC events".

However, Bangladesh's sports adviser Asif Nazrul told the media in Dhaka on Thursday that the team would not travel to India for the World Cup as they could not risk the security of the players, journalists and fans. The decision means that Bangladesh are likely to be replaced in the 20-team tournament if the Bangladesh government does not budge from its stated position. "Security is the responsibility of that country's police and security agencies. So what has changed since that incident that would make us believe that there will be no extremist flare-ups again? They could not protect Mustafiz (ur Rehman). How can we be convinced that they can protect our players, journalists and supporters," Nazrul said. However, he kept a window for behind-the-doors negotiation with the ICC board.

## SHEIKH HASINA OUTLINES FIVE STEPS TO "HEAL THE COUNTRY", SEEKS REMOVAL OF MUHAMMAD YUNUS TO "RESTORE DEMOCRACY"

**Diary Times Desk :** Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday called for actions to help unify the country and "banish the divisive actions of the past twelve months", sought the removal of "illegal Yunus administration" and an impartial investigation by the United Nations into the events of the past year." Sheikh Hasina, who launched a blistering attack on Chief Adviser of Interim Government Muhammad Yunus in a speech here, called for ending politically motivated acts used "to intimidate jail journalists and members of the Bangladesh Awami League and opposition political parties". The Awami League leader also sought an iron-clad guarantee for the safety of religious minority groups, women and girls and vulnerable sections of the society. Bangladesh's interim government has banned the activities of Awami League (AL) and has said it will not be able to participate in the national election scheduled for February 12. The Election Commission of Bangladesh has deregistered the party. "The Awami League calls for the following actions to help unify Bangladesh and banish the divisive actions of the past twelve months.



## PAKISTAN: SECURITY OPERATION LEAVES TIRAH CIVILIANS IN DEADLY COLD

**Diary Times Desk :** Thousands of residents from Tirah Maidan have been forcibly displaced amid freezing winter conditions following a security operation, triggering a growing humanitarian crisis and sharp criticism of the state's handling of civilian populations in conflict zones. In a post shared on X, PTM Khyber stated that entire families, including children, women, and the elderly, were compelled to leave their homes on foot, trekking for days through mountainous terrain under extreme cold. With roads blocked by heavy snowfall, many families were left stranded along the way, some sheltering inside vehicles without adequate food, heating, or medical support. After enduring the perilous journey, displaced civilians faced further hardship during the so-called "registration" process. Witnesses say families were made to wait on open roads for three to four days without tents, sanitation facilities, or basic arrangements. The prolonged delays exposed vulnerable groups to illness, exhaustion.

## UAE CONTRIBUTES \$5 MILLION TO SUPPORT EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN SUDAN

**Diary Times Desk :** As per an agreement signed with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Arab Emirates has pledged a contribution of US\$5 million to support the Sudan Humanitarian Fund, aimed at strengthening the emergency humanitarian response and addressing the urgent needs of the affected populations in Sudan. The agreement was signed between the UAE Aid Agency and OCHA, in the presence of Tareq Ahmed Al Ameri, Chairman of the UAE Aid Agency. It was signed by Rashid Salem Al Shamsi, Executive Director of Logistics Support at the UAE Aid Agency, and Sajeda Al Shawa, Head of OCHA's Office in the UAE. "In light of the ongoing conflict in Sudan, the UAE continues its urgent humanitarian response and stands in solidarity with those affected by this tragic and devastating civil war. The UAE remains committed to supporting international efforts.

## "ZELENSKYY CROSSED A LINE," HUNGARY DENIES AID TO UKRAINE



**Diary Times Desk :** Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor critiqued Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Viktor said that Brussels agreed to all demands presented by Zelenskyy and yet he criticised them. "Yesterday in Davos, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy crossed a line. There is nothing new in the fact that, as elections approach in Hungary, he once again placed the Hungarian government, and me personally, in his sights. What was surprising, however, was that in his speech he also criticised every other European leader. He says the support sent to Ukraine is insufficient, the weapons are insufficient, and Europe's determination is insufficient. We did not have to wait long for the response from Brussels. Last night, presented a roadmap for Ukraine's development. In it, the Brusselians accepted every Ukrainian demand. \$800 billion for Ukraine, accelerated EU accession by 2027, and further support all the way until 2040. This is where things stand," he said in a post on X. "President Zelenskyy has things all backwards, yet the Brusselians are eager to pay up. We will have a few words to say about this as well. A national petition is coming, through which we can send a clear message to Brussels: we will not pay!" he added. Zelenskyy on Thursday, in a sharp address at the World Economic Forum in Davos, noted Europe was failing to act decisively on its own defence and security, warning that the continent remained trapped in a cycle of repeated discussions without concrete action. Drawing a comparison with the film Groundhog Day, Zelenskyy said Europe's approach looked like the same situation playing out again and again.

## "VERY GLAD TO SAY THAT FIRST COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION WILL START IN 2026": VAISHNAW LAUDS PROGRESS OF INDIA'S SEMICON MISSION

**Diary Times Desk :** Union Electronics and Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday expressed satisfaction over the progress of India's Semiconductor Mission, stating that the government has met its target of initiating commercial semiconductor chip production within the planned timeline. Speaking to ANI, Vaishnaw said that when the Semiconductor Mission was launched in January 2022, the government had set a goal of starting commercial production within five years. He noted that the first commercial production will begin in 2026, with four plants expected to commence operations this year. He added that pilot production has already started in three plants in 2025. "When we started the Semiconductor Mission on 1st January 2022, we had taken a target that within five years, we should start the commercial production. Very glad to say that the first commercial production will start in 2026 itself. Four of the plants will start their commercial production in 2026. The pilot production already started in 3 plants in 2025 itself," Ashwini Vaishnaw told ANI.

## MAMTIMIN ALA SLAMS GLOBAL APATHY OVER UYGHUR FORCED LABOUR, CALLS IT 'MORAL SCANDAL OF HISTORIC SCALE'

**Diary Times Desk :** Mamtimin Ala, President of the East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE), has issued a sharp condemnation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over what he described as the continued use of Uyghur slave labour as part of an ongoing genocide in East Turkistan, calling it one of the gravest moral failures of modern history. In a post on X, Ala said slavery, "one of the oldest moral wrongs in history", has been taken to an even darker level by the CCP through the systematic exploitation of Uyghur Muslims, turning human lives into "mere instruments for profit" in full view of the world. According to Ala, the suffering inflicted through forced labour goes far beyond financial exploitation, amounting to a profound moral collapse that strips individuals of dignity and humanity. He stressed that the tragedy is compounded by the emergence of a third participant in this system: global consumers. Ala argued that globalisation has enabled a vast consumer base to benefit from products linked to Uyghur forced labour.

## JAPAN PM DISSOLVES PARLIAMENT, CALLS SNAP ELECTION ON FEBRUARY 8



**Diary Times Desk :** Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Friday dissolved the House of Representatives and announced a snap general election to be held on February 8, seeking public support for her economic and security policy agenda, Kyodo News reported. The 465-member lower house was dissolved by Takaichi's cabinet during the early hours of the regular parliamentary session. This is the first time this has happened at the start of a regular session in almost 60 years. The decision effectively launched a short and intense election campaign. Although the current term of lawmakers was set to expire in 2028, Takaichi defended her decision by stating that she has not yet received a direct public mandate for her leadership. She became prime minister in October, the same month her Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) formed a new ruling coalition with the Japan Innovation Party. The election will also see the debut of a new opposition grouping. The Centrist Reform Alliance was recently launched by the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and the Komeito party, which had been the LDP's coalition partner for 26 years.

## PROTEST DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR BANGLADESHI HINDUS SEES OVERWHELMING TURNOUT

**Diary Times Desk :** Amid the cold weather conditions, a large crowd gathered at the Parliament Square in London on Wednesday in a demonstration calling for international attention against the continued torture, persecution and killing of minorities in Bangladesh, a statement by the Bangladesh Hindu Association and Bengali Hindu Adarsh Sangha said. Organised by the Bangladesh Hindu Association (BHA) and supported by INSIGHT UK and the Bengali Hindu Adarsh Sangha (BHAS), this British Hindu diaspora event drew an audience of over 500 participants representing students, professionals, parents with children, elderly activists and interfaith leaders. Attendees included Baroness Sandeep Verma, Lord Dolar Popat, former MP Virendra Sharma, MP Navendu Mishra, MP Luke Murphy, MP Jim Dickson, Birmingham Cllr Andrew Hardie, and MP Andrew Mitchell. All dignitaries accepted the fact that this is no less than an ethnic.

## 'DEAR PM CARNEY...': TRUMP WITHDRAWS INVITATION FOR CANADA TO JOIN GAZA BOARD OF PEACE

**Diary Times Desk :** US President Donald Trump on Friday withdrew the invitation from Canada to join the Board of Peace. In what appeared to be a curt post on Truth Social on Friday, Trump reiterated his stance of calling it the "most prestigious board" to ever be assembled. He said, "Dear Prime Minister Carney: Please let this Letter serve to represent that the Board of Peace is withdrawing its invitation to you regarding Canada's joining, what will be, the most prestigious Board of Leaders ever assembled, at any time. Thank you for your attention to this matter!" The development follows after US President Donald Trump on Thursday signed the charter to formally launch his "Board of Peace" initiative at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, describing it as a major step towards global conflict resolution. Calling it a "very exciting day, long in the making", Trump said, "We're going to have peace in the world."

## 'HOPE WE CAN SAVE A LOT OF LIVES...': TRUMP AHEAD OF TRILATERAL TALKS ON UKRAINE WAR IN ABU DHABI

**Diary Times Desk :** US President Donald Trump is hopeful that the upcoming trilateral talks between Russia, Ukraine and the United States in the UAE would "help save a lot of lives". Reiterating his claim of having resolved several wars, Trump said that his initiatives are aimed more towards Europe than the US. Trump made the remarks while speaking to the press on board Air Force One while returning from Davos. On his conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, US President Donald Trump said, "We had a conversation. I've had numerous conversations on Ukraine. It would be nice to end the war... it costs us nothing. We make money. I don't want to make money, but we make money. Biden spent \$350 billion stupidly and lost a lot of money. But it's not about the money. It's about 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers a month being killed... I've had numerous good meetings with President Zelenskyy. It's funny. I put out a 35-year war in a day, a 32-year war in two days. In other wars, the worst was like four days. But this one goes on and on forever. And actually, they may have been more complex..." Trump on Thursday held talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, with the war in Ukraine remaining a key focus of discussions at the summit. According to CNN, the meeting concluded after lasting around an hour. After the closed-door interaction, Zelenskyy's communications advisor said he had a "good meeting" with Trump in Davos on Thursday.



## MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS CALLS FOR HOLISTIC HEALING AS BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS GAIN MODERN RELEVANCE

**Diary Times Desk :** Mental health remains one of the most pressing yet frequently overlooked dimensions of human well-being in contemporary society. Amid the relentless pace of daily life, individuals often prioritise external achievements, material pursuits, and routine obligations, while neglecting the inner equilibrium that sustains resilience and clarity. The Buddha's timeless teaching in the Dhammapada, "The mind is the forerunner of all things", states that our mental state is not a passive backdrop, but rather the primary driver of how we perceive, interpret, and respond to the world around us. Just as a skilled driver determines the direction, safety, and efficiency of a vehicle, the mind governs the course of our daily activities, shaping both our immediate reactions and our long-term outlook. When the mind is nurtured, disciplined, and balanced, it enables individuals to navigate challenges with composure and purpose. Conversely, when neglected, it can distort perceptions, amplify stress, and erode the foundations of personal and collective well-being. Alarming global trends underscore the urgency of addressing mental health. Rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide have escalated to unprecedented levels, cutting across age groups.

## KARACHI SHOPPING MALL FIRE: FAMILIES OF VICTIMS PROTEST AS DOZENS STILL MISSING AFTER JANUARY 17

### BLAZE

**Diary Times Desk :** Nearly a week after the catastrophic fire at Gul Plaza shopping centre, anger and despair among families of the missing erupted into open protest, exposing what relatives describe as a troubling lack of urgency by authorities, as reported by The Express Tribune. Women clutching photographs of sons, husbands and brothers assembled near the charred site, accusing officials and rescue teams of moving painfully slowly while their loved ones remained unaccounted for, it said.

The death toll from the January 17 fire at the shopping centre in the Pakistani city of Karachi has risen to at least 67, and rescue teams have been working to locate dozens of people still missing after the blaze quickly spread through the shopping centre, fuelled by goods such as cosmetics, clothing and plastic household items, Al Jazeera reported.

## SILVER, GOLD HIT LIFETIME HIGHS ON WEAK DOLLAR, FED RATE EASING HOPES

**Diary Times Desk :** Gold and silver prices rallied on Friday to hit fresh lifetime highs in the futures trade, tracking record gains in international markets amid a weakening US dollar and rising expectations of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the March contract of silver soared by Rs 12,638, or nearly 4 per cent, to scale a new peak of Rs 3,39,927 per kg. Silver futures in the previous session on Wednesday had touched a record high of Rs 3,35,521 per kg. Gold also scaled a fresh lifetime high, advancing for the fifth straight day. The yellow metal for February delivery jumped by Rs 2,885, or 1.84 per cent, to Rs 1,59,226 per 10 grams on the MCX. It had settled at Rs 1,56,341 per 10 grams on Thursday. "Gold's surge to record highs on the MCX reflects a powerful convergence of global risk factors and macroeconomic tailwinds," Rahul Gupta, Chief Business Officer at Ashika Group, said. Gupta attributed the rally to heightened geopolitical tensions and persistent geo-economic uncertainty, which have reigned safe-haven demand. He added that the weakening US dollar has further improved bullion's sentiment among global investors.

## GOVT CLEARS WAGE, PENSION REVISION FOR RBI, NABARD AND PSGICS EMPLOYEES

**Diary Times Desk :** The central government has approved the wage revision for Public Sector General Insurance Companies (PSGICs) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), thus boosting the morale of the serving employees and ensuring the social security of pensioners in the financial sector. Additionally, the government has approved pension revision for retirees of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and NABARD. For PSGICs employees, the wage revision will be effective from August 1, 2022. The overall hike in wage bill shall be 12.41% with an increase of 14% on existing basic pay and dearness allowance. A total of 43,247 PSGIC employees will benefit from this revision and will also incorporate an enhancement in NPS contribution from 10% to 14% for a better future of employees who had joined after 01.04.2010.

## MARKETS TANKS NEARLY 1% AMID WIDESPREAD SELL-OFF; SENSEX SLIPS BELOW 82,000

**Diary Times Desk :** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty resumed their downward journey to end nearly 1 per cent lower on Friday, dragged by widespread sell-off and the rupee depreciating to hit a record low against the US dollar. Besides, investors rushing to safe-haven assets from riskier assets and unabated foreign capital outflows in the absence of domestic triggers added to the gloom, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 769.67 points, or 0.94 per cent, to close at 81,537.70. During the day, the index slumped 835.55 points, or 1.01 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 81,471.82. The 50-share NSE Nifty dived 241.25 points, or 0.95 per cent, to settle at 25,048.65. In the intraday session, it plunged 264.6 points, or 1.04 per cent, to hit a low of 25,025.30. Among the 30 Sensex constituents, Adani Ports, Eternal, IndiGo, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid, Bharat Electronics Ltd, State Bank of India, Maruti Suzuki India, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Trent, Larsen & Toubro and Reliance Industries were the laggards.



## INDIA'S PRIVATE SECTOR GROWTH BOUNCED BACK IN JANUARY AFTER DIP IN DECEMBER

**Diary Times Desk :** India's private sector kicked-off on a stronger run in 2026, with economic activity picking up pace in January, as demand strengthened and companies upped hiring, flash survey results from S&P Global showed on Friday. HSBC Flash India Composite Output Index rose to 59.5 in January from an 11-month low of 57.8 in December. Manufacturing and services sectors witnessed increases in output, with rates of growth broadly similar. Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) climbed to 56.8 from 55.0 in December, while Services PMI Business Activity Index increased to 59.3 from 58.0. The HSBC index is a seasonally adjusted index that measures the month-on-month change in the combined output of India's manufacturing and service sectors. According to survey, sales were fuelled by strengthening demand conditions and aggressive marketing campaigns. The January data showed a marked upturn in aggregate international orders, one that was the greatest in four months. Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East featured in the qualitative part of the survey as the main destinations for Indian goods and services in January.



## SC SEEKS STATUS REPORTS FROM CBI, ED ON PIL ALLEGING BANKING FRAUD BY ANIL DHIRUBHAI AMBANI GROUP

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Friday issued fresh notices to industrialist Anil Ambani and Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG) on a PIL seeking a court-monitored probe into alleged large-scale banking and corporate fraud involving the group and its associate entities. A bench led by CJI Surya Kant directed CBI and ED to file status reports in sealed covers in 10 days on the progress of their respective probe into the alleged fraud. On November 18, 2025, the top court had issued notices to the Centre, CBI, ED, Anil Ambani, and ADAG on a PIL filed by former Union Power Secretary EAS Sarma. Noting that Ambani and ADAG had not responded yet, the apex court said this would be their final opportunity to respond to the petition. Directing the Bombay High Court Registrar General to ensure proper service of notice on Ambani and ADAG and to file a compliance report, the top court posted the matter for further hearing after 10 days. Petitioner Sarma alleged that ADAG entities were involved in fraudulent diversion of public funds, fabrication of financial statements, and systemic collusion with institutional actors.



## EU GSP REGULATION TO IMPACT ONLY 2.66% OF INDIA'S EXPORTS

**Diary Times Desk :** The European Union Generalised System of preferences (GSP) regulation impacts only 2.66% of India's exports to the European Union, underscoring the limited trade effect of EU's GSP Regulations 2025, effective from January 1 this year, according to an official from the Commerce Ministry. The European Union's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) is a unilateral trade preference scheme under which the EU grants reduced or zero customs duties to imports from developing and least-developed countries. The GSP is non-reciprocal and operates as an exception to the WTO's Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) principle. Its permanent legal basis under WTO law is the 1979 Enabling Clause, which allows developed countries to grant differential and more favourable treatment to developing countries, the official said. In 2023, EU imports from India amounted to approximately EUR 62.2 billion. Of this, only EUR 12.9 billion was eligible under the EU's Standard GSP framework. India has graduated from 12 major product categories. As per new Regulation, EUR 1.66 billion of trade is expected.

## ADANI POWER TO RAISE RS 7,500 CRORE THROUGH NCD; LARGEST DOMESTIC BOND ISSUANCE BY ADANI GROUP

**Diary Times Desk :** Adani Power is planning to raise nearly Rs 7,500 crore from institutional investors through the issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs), sources familiar with the development told ANI. This would mark the Adani Group's largest domestic bond issuance to date. According to sources, major investors in the proposed NCD issue include SBI, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, and Kotak Mahindra Bank, among others. The proceeds from the fundraise are expected to be used for general corporate expenses and other requirements, they said. Adani Power, the group's thermal power arm, currently operates 18 GW of installed capacity and has outlined plans to scale this up to 42 GW by FY32. As per the company's latest consolidated financial results, Adani Power's net debt-to-EBITDA ratio stands at approximately 1.6x. Meanwhile, global rating agencies Moody's and Fitch have recently revised the outlook on Adani Group.

## PHONEPE FILES UPDATED DRHP WITH SEBI, RECORDS STRONG 40% YEAR-ON-YEAR GROWTH

**Diary Times Desk :** Following the recent approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), PhonePe has submitted its Updated Draft Red Herring Prospectus (UDRHP), moving closer to its highly anticipated public listing. The company, which initially filed confidential IPO papers in September 2024, is now expected to debut on the markets soon. As per the UDRHP, the public offering will be an offer for sale, led by majority shareholder Walmart alongside other prominent investors such as Tiger Global and Microsoft. PhonePe dominates India's UPI landscape with more than 48% market share by value, processing 9.8 billion transactions in December alone, according to recent data from the NPCI. The company has posted rapidly growing revenues with diversified revenue streams in recent years while steadily improving its financial performance. Beyond its core payments business, PhonePe has successfully diversified into lending and insurance distribution verticals that have scaled to represent 10% of its total revenue in just three years. This strategic expansion has been a key driver of the company's revenue growth and its increasingly maturing financial profile.



## GIFT CITY ATTRACTS GLOBAL INVESTORS AT WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM 2026



**Diary Times Desk :** During its first participation at the forum, the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) delegation engaged with international investors to position India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) as a scalable destination for banking, capital markets, and fintech. Global firms expressed interest in deepening engagement regarding India-linked financial services and cross-border operations. GIFT City's MD and Group CEO, Sanjay Kaul, noted the shift in how international businesses view the Indian market. "India is at a defining stage in its economic journey, with global institutions increasingly viewing the country not just as a market, but as a base for sophisticated financial and technology operations. The discussions at Davos reflect growing confidence in GIFT City's regulatory framework and operating environment, and its ability to offer global firms a competitive, internationally aligned platform within India's jurisdiction to participate in the country's long-term growth," Kaul said. The delegation conducted structured meetings with senior leaders from major financial firms, including Euroclear, Marsh McLennan, Invesco, Visa, and Nasdaq. These talks focused on the evolution of India's capital markets and the operational benefits provided by the IFSC ecosystem, such as the unified regulatory environment and ease of capital movement. The interest from these institutions underscored the growing recognition of the IFSC as a credible platform for international business expansion. Digital infrastructure and technology were also central to the discussions. Meetings with companies such as Qualcomm, Cognizant, Wipro, and HCL Software highlighted GIFT City's role as a hub for Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and cybersecurity. Conversations with stakeholders like the IMD Business School and Egon Zehnder further established the city as an institutional destination. The delegation also participated in roundtables and sessions hosted by the Swiss Embassy and the Confederation of Indian Industry to discuss the future of global capital flows.

## SNOW IN HIMACHAL, J-K AND RAIN IN PUNJAB, HARYANA INTENSIFY COLD IN REGION

**Diary Times Desk :** Snow in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir and widespread rain in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi on Friday morning intensified cold wave in the region. Himachal witnessed the first widespread snow of the season, ending a prolonged dry period of nearly four months. Higher regions of Shimla district, including Chopal, Rampur, Narkanda, Khadapathar and Kufri, have been receiving snow since morning. Road connectivity in the upper reaches of Kullu and Lahaul-Spiti was disrupted due to heavy snow. Vehicular movement was affected on key routes, including the Manali-Leh highway, Darcha-Shinkula road, and the road between Tandi and Kadu Nala. Mild snow was reported from Manali, Dagshai and Chail, while lower regions received rain.

## STUDENTS MADE TO MISS CLASSES TO ATTEND HIMACHAL CM SUKHU'S RALLY IN SULAH

**Diary Times Desk :** Hundreds of students and teachers from state-run schools were allegedly forced to miss their classes on Thursday to attend a public rally addressed by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at Sulah in Kangra district. The students in school uniform from several government senior secondary schools were seen at the venue, raising concern over disruption of academic activities at a crucial time, just weeks ahead of annual examinations. The Deputy Director of the Education Department Kamlesh Thakur claimed that the event was part of an "anti-chitta" (anti-drugs) awareness campaign, for which students of Classes 10, 11 and 12 from various government schools were asked to participate. The students told The Tribune that they were instructed to report to their schools in the morning to mark attendance and were then taken by teachers to the rally venue. A student of Government Senior Secondary School, Garh Jamoola, said they were asked to assemble at school before being taken to the function. "We were not told that we would miss our regular classes," he said. Another student from Government Senior Secondary School, Paror, said the rally caused him to miss both school and tuition classes. "Examinations are approaching and we lost an important study.

## SHIMLA GETS FIRST SNOW OF SEASON, DRY SPELL ENDS

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal Pradesh on Friday witnessed the first widespread snow of the season, bringing an end to the three-month dry spell in the state. While the higher reaches of Lahaul and Spiti and Chamba had received snow earlier, most mountain regions had seen no snow till now. Apart from the high-altitude areas of Shimla and Kinnar, the state capital also witnessed snow. The higher regions of Shimla district, like Chopal, Rampur, Narkanda, Khadapathar and Kufri, have been receiving snow since morning. At some places such as Deha and Chopal, roads have been closed for traffic due to heavy snow accumulation. Power supply has been disrupted at several places. The Meteorological Department had issued an orange alert for widespread snow and rain on January 22 and 23. The precipitation is likely to continue through the day, according to the forecast. The snow and rain have brought relief and cheer to farmers and fruit-growers, who had been under severe stress due to extreme dry conditions over the past three months. The snow is also expected to provide much-needed relief to the tourism sector.



## GEOTHERMAL ENERGY TO POWER HIMACHAL'S 'GREEN FUTURE': SUKHU

**Diary Times Desk :** Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Thursday said Himachal Pradesh has set an ambitious goal of becoming a Green Energy State by 2026, with plans to meet over 90 per cent of its energy requirements through renewable sources. Chairing a review meeting with senior officers, the Chief Minister underlined that the state government has initiated a series of measures aimed at a systemic transition towards a clean, self-reliant and sustainable energy future. Highlighting the state's untapped geothermal potential, Sukhu said regions such as Manikaran and Kasol in Kullu district and Tattapani in Mandi district hold significant promise. These areas record surface temperatures ranging from 57 to 97 degree Celsius and exhibit high geothermal gradients, making them suitable not only for electricity generation but also for tourism-based development centred on hot springs. Harnessing geothermal resources, he said, reflects the government's commitment to innovative governance and optimal utilisation of Himachal Pradesh's natural assets. Small-scale geothermal plants could reduce dependence on wood and fossil fuels while providing reliable power to remote villages in districts such as Kullu, Mandi and Lahaul-Spiti. Cold towns like Shimla, Manali and Keylong could particularly benefit from geothermal heating solutions, he added.

## HIMACHAL: PERFORM OR PERISH, HPCC PRESIDENT WARNS DISTRICT HEADS

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee (HPCC) president Vinay Kumar today sent a strong message to the newly appointed district Congress presidents, stating that their performance would be closely monitored and any poor performer would be replaced to ensure the strengthening of the party in the state. Addressing a party function in Mandi, Vinay Kumar said discipline and dedication were essential for office-bearers and workers in the Congress organisation and indiscipline would not be tolerated at any level. The programme was organised by the newly appointed District Congress president of Mandi, Champa Thakur, daughter of senior Congress leader and former minister Kaul Singh Thakur. Vinay Kumar said that only those party workers, who were willing to devote time and energy for the welfare of the organisation, would be given responsibilities. He added that he had taken up the matter with Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and requested that dedicated Congress workers who could not be adjusted in the government be accommodated in the party organisation. He announced that within the next two weeks, district and block-level committees would be constituted, providing opportunities to committed party workers to strengthen the organisation.

## YOUR HOROSCOPE

24-01-2026

### Aries

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

### Leo

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

### Sagittarius

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

### Taurus

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

### Virgo

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

### Capricorn

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

### Gemini

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

### Libra

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

### Aquarius

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

### Cancer

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

### Scorpio

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

### Pisces

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

## HC FLAGS ALTERNATIVE REMEDY, LEAVES JALANDHAR HOTEL CLOSURE CHALLENGE TO NGT

**Diary Times Desk :** Holding that the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) is empowered to act without issuing a prior show-cause notice in emergent situations, the Punjab and Haryana High Court disposed of a writ petition challenging the closure of a hotel in Jalandhar and disconnection of its electricity, leaving it open for the aggrieved party to avail a remedy before the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The order by the Bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry came on a petition filed against the State of Punjab and other respondents by The Hind Samachar Limited and another petitioner. The matter was placed before the Bench after the petitioner challenged the action taken by the PPCB against the hotel situated at Project Park Plaza, Civil Lines, Jalandhar—having 72 rooms, a banquet hall, two restaurants and a swimming pool. "The nature of pollution involved in the present case is the effluent discharged by the petitioner-hotel," the Bench observed.

## PUNJAB RERA SOUNDS ALARM ON REAL ESTATE 'LACK OF VISION', URGES OVERHAUL

**Diary Times Desk :** The Punjab Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) has called for urgent regional and national-level strategic planning of real estate development, warned of a "lack of vision" among competent authorities issuing licences, and strongly recommended the creation of a single-window, API-based clearance system, digitisation of land records with title guarantees, and mandatory insurance of real estate projects to protect allottees from abandoned and delayed projects. "Before this bench departs from its judgment it strongly feels to be its bounden duty to suggest certain recommendations to be made to the appropriate Government and competent authorities under Section 32 of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, in order to facilitate the growth and promotion of a healthy, transparent, efficient and competitive real estate sector," RERA member Arunvir Vashista asserted, while directing that the recommendations be placed before the full authority and forwarded to the government for consideration.

## DECIDE AMRITPAL SINGH'S PAROLE PLEA IN 7 DAYS, HIGH COURT TELLS PUNJAB

**Diary Times Desk :** The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Friday directed Punjab to decide within seven working days the representation of Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh seeking temporary release to attend the upcoming Budget Session of Parliament. Amritpal Singh is currently under preventive detention under the National Security Act (NSA). Disposing of the writ petition, the Division Bench headed by Chief Justice Sheel Nagu held that the power to grant temporary release under Section 15 of the National Security Act was with the "appropriate government" — which, in the present case, was the State government. The court then ordered the Home Secretary, Department of Home Affairs and Justice, Government of Punjab, to take a decision on the representation dated January 17 and to communicate the outcome forthwith to him and his counsel. The petitioner, a sitting Member of Parliament, had sought parole or temporary release to attend the Budget Session scheduled in two phases — from January 28 to February 13, and from March 9 to April 2 — invoking his constitutional role as an elected representative. He had also complained that his representation to the authorities, including one addressed to the Home Secretary on January 17, remained undecided.



## 'RAO VS RAO' IN HARYANA: AIR GRIEVANCES AT PARTY FORA OR FACE ACTION, WARNS BJP

**Diary Times Desk :** Taking exception to "Rao vs Rao" public outbursts, the BJP has cracked the whip against the leaders airing opinions against fellow party leaders, asking them to use party fora for voicing their concerns. The party action comes close on the heels of Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh and Rao Narbir Singh taking potshots at each other publicly. "The party has taken a serious view of certain leaders expressing their opinion about fellow party leaders at public platforms. They have been warned not to do so in future, failing which disciplinary action will be taken. There are several fora within the party where the leaders can air their grievances," BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli told 'The Tribune'. Recently, both senior leaders, traditional rivals from the Ahirwal belt, had made below-the-belt remarks against each other, bringing differences within the party to the fore. For long, the BJP has prided itself as the "party with a difference" where discipline and commitment to the ideology are seen as its major characteristics. It has been mocking the Congress for factionalism. On the basis of its unity, the BJP was able to score a hat trick in the 2024 Assembly polls, however, the Congress had to pay a price for its rampant factionalism.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BUDGET MAKING WILL EMPOWER HARYANA: CM SAINI

**Diary Times Desk :** Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said a budget prepared with public participation will play a significant role in making Haryana a self-reliant, empowered and developed state. During a pre-budget consultation meeting here today, the CM said, "This is the budget of 2.8 crore citizens of Haryana. The government's objective is to prepare a budget that ensures participation of every section and accelerates the state's overall development. Suggestions for the budget are being sought from every section of society. All officers and experts will consider the suggestions and the budget will be prepared keeping in mind the interests of the common man." Saini assured all organisation representatives present that the government would sincerely consider the suggestions received from farmers, workers, youth, advocates, educators, sportspersons and social organisations. "The state government aims to present a visionary, balanced and people-centric budget whose impact will not remain confined to paper, but will be clearly visible on the ground in the coming years," said Saini.

## CM OPENS SYNTHETIC HOCKEY GROUND BUILT AT KURUKSHETRA VARSITY



**Diary Times Desk :** Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday said that high-quality infrastructure was being provided by the Haryana Government to the athletes to help them win medals at the Olympics. The Chief Minister said to nurture the hidden sporting talent in the state, the government had established sports nurseries along with other sports centres. The government has also ensured world-class facilities for athletes, as a result of which Haryana players were bringing the highest number of medals for the country. The Chief Minister was interacting with athletes on Thursday at a programme organised by the Kurukshetra University administration at the sports complex of the university. Earlier, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Sports Minister Gaurav Gautam inaugurated a synthetic hockey ground constructed at a cost of about Rs 5.50 crore under the Khelo India Scheme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, of the central government. The Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone of an all-weather swimming pool project to be constructed at a cost of Rs 8 crore under the Khelo India Scheme. After the inauguration, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Sports State Minister Gaurav Gautam themselves held hockey sticks and played a stroke on the new synthetic turf to mark the inauguration of the turf.

## EDITORIAL

Drones have already revolutionized warfare.

They're about to do it again

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### The evolution of drones

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

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

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



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## Australia's About To Find Out

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



Hilary Whiteman

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

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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites



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

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

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

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

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

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

For millions of children, it could be the first school break they spend in years without the company of time-killing social media algorithms, or an easy way to contact their 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 its children.

INFA

## A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### A blue school bag

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## MATTHEW BOULTON: THE COLLECTOR'S GUIDE

### Diary Times Desk :

Born in 1728 in Birmingham, England, Matthew Boulton was a true polymath, whose career achievements spanned business, science, design and metalwork. In addition to playing a key role in the Industrial Revolution, he raised British craftsmanship to new heights with his Soho Manufactory, which became the preeminent purveyor of luxury goods in eighteenth century England.

Fellow industrialist Josiah Wedgwood described him as 'the most complete manufacturer in England in metal.' Boulton was also an integral member of the Lunar Society, a renowned circle of scientists, industrialists and thinkers whose innovations spurred technological advancement throughout Britain.

Most famously, Boulton partnered with James Watt to produce the first truly efficient steam engine, which made steam a widely usable power source for manufacturing and transportation. Boulton implemented the new machinery to modernise the production of coinage in England, introducing precision-engineered, machine-struck coins that were nearly impossible to counterfeit. Boulton's ambitions stretched far beyond industry: even as he advanced scientific inquiry, he remained unwavering in his belief that British craftsmanship could rival, and even surpass, the finest continental workshops.

In 1762, Boulton opened the Soho Manufactory, a revolutionary production center that pioneered new methods for luxury objects. Adapted from the small metals-manufacturing business he inherited from his father, the Soho Manufactory was built on a radical model of vertical integration: drawing, modelling, casting, chasing, gilding and finishing were all to take place under one roof.

This innovation allowed Boulton to expand his production from small metal goods into grander and more complex objects including clocks and mechanical devices, which the Manufactory executed using new processes for silver-plate and, most formatively, gilt bronze or 'ormolu.' In the intricate ormolu process, gold paste is applied to a bronze base and the object is fired to remove the mercury, leaving behind an illusion of solid gold. In 1768, after a visit to Paris, Boulton opened a dedicated ormolu department, to resounding success: within a year, orders were arriving from Britain's most elite tastemakers, including the Royal family. Thanks to Soho, Boulton was celebrated as the producer of the most exquisite objets de luxe in England.



## MEET MATHILDE FAVIER, THE EMBODIMENT OF PARISIAN CHIC: 'THIS IS NOT JUST A SIMPLE AUCTION, BUT A SALE OF THE SOUL'

### Diary Times Desk :

Mathilde Favier is one of fashion's most sparkling figures. She's also one of the best-connected women in Paris. Her call history is a who's who of the city's most esteemed figures in fashion, beauty, art, interior design and gastronomy, among them the gallerist Pierre Paslebon, the interior designer Laura Gonzalez and the fashion designer Julie de Libran, all of whom she counts as good friends. It's no surprise, given that she hails from one of Paris's most creative families: her half-sister is the acclaimed jewellery designer Victoire de Castellane; her uncle, Gilles Dufour, was Karl Lagerfeld's right-hand man at Chanel; and her younger sister, Pauline Favier-Henin, now runs the lifestyle brand Bloom Paris.

Her childhood, she says, was typically Parisian: she took dance classes on the Champs-Elysées and sipped hot chocolate at the Trocadéro. Through her mother, she met Lee Radziwill and the celebrated antiques dealer and interior designer Madeleine Castaing, who, she says, would often stop by their family home for tea.

In her recent book, *Mathilde à Paris* (Flammarion, 2024), Favier offers us a glimpse into her world and that of her friends. 'I get nostalgic for the Paris I grew up in, a Paris that was beautiful and refined, filled with charming people and charming places that you wouldn't be able to find anywhere else in the world,' she says. 'I wanted to create a book about what makes the Paris I love and the people that I love who live here.' Featuring text by Frédérique Dedet, archival imagery and new photographs by Pascal Chevallier, it takes readers on a journey through the Parisian cafés, shops, studios and secret addresses beloved of Favier and her circle. The result is part mood board, part insider's guide to the French art of *je ne sais quoi* — the elusive yet distinctive quality that Parisians have in abundance. It also includes a chapter on hosting, which is illustrated with photographs of Favier's former home, a duplex in a 19th-century building in Paris's 16th arrondissement. 'It was a charming house,' she says. 'I absolutely loved living there.' The interiors featured a mix of bright colours, textiles and patterns, notably chintz, as well as fine and decorative arts from around the world. She drew inspiration from Hauteville House on Guernsey, where Victor Hugo lived in exile from 1856 to 1870. 'Every room in that house has a different atmosphere and tells a different story,' she says. 'I tried to recreate something similar in my own home.' The walls of her dining room, for instance, were covered with Indian fabric panels from Simrane, while her bedroom walls were painted with Japanese magnolia flowers.



## COMO REACH VERBAL AGREEMENT TO SIGN BARCELONA DEFENSIVE PRODIGY – FABRIZIO ROMANO



**Diary Times Desk :** Having already been rocked by Pedro Fernandez Dros's decision to leave the club this month, Barcelona are gearing up for the exit of yet another youth prospect. The player in question is Andres Cuenca, an 18-year-old defensive prospect who is regarded as a top talent at La Masia. It was recently reported that Como had made an approach for Cuenca. And now it seems the Italian club are on the verge of completing the capture of the young Spaniard. According to Fabrizio Romano, Como are closing in on a deal to sign Andres Cuenca from Barcelona this month. The Italian outfit, managed by Cesc Fabregas, have already reached verbal agreement, with Cuenca likely to join the team on a permanent deal. However, the youngster will be immediately loaned out so that he can receive regular game time at the highest level of football. Barcelona, for their part.

## TER STEGEN OPENS UP ON LEAVING BARCELONA: 'HARD FOR ME TO TALK ABOUT IT'

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona captain Marc-Andre Ter Stegen left the club and joined Girona on a temporary loan deal earlier this week in a transfer that looks to be a favour handed to the player by the club.

After all, it was initially expected that Barcelona would use the upcoming FIFA World Cup and his need for minutes as a card to negotiate a permanent exit, but it turns out that they are not only covering most of his salary but have also not included any purchase clause.

In many ways, it appears that the Catalans are handing him a free ticket to the World Cup while also helping him retain his place in the first team and the wage bill with no fight. Speaking to the media as a new Girona player earlier this week, the former Barcelona captain opened up on what he expected from the loan and made it very clear that he was not there to play as a backup option. He then spoke on how leaving Barcelona was not easy, more so at this stage in his career, and how he had a lot of emotional bondage to the club. "It's still hard for me to talk about it. It's a big change after 12 years. I have unforgettable memories. I was the captain of Barça."

## BARCELONA STRENGTHEN YOUTH TEAM ATTACK WITH TWO NEW SIGNINGS

**Diary Times Desk :** According to a report from Mundo Deportivo, Barcelona are set to complete another youth signing before the transfer window closes. In addition to the arrival of Hamza Abdelkarim from Al Ahly, the Catalan club are also finalising the move for Ajay Tavares, who will initially join the reserve side. Sources close to the player have confirmed that Tavares will become part of Barcelona B before the window shuts.

While Tavares is British by nationality, he holds a European Union passport, a key factor that allows him to immediately enter La Masia and compete with the reserves without having to wait until he reaches legal age. From a sporting perspective, Tavares fits a profile Barcelona have been actively targeting in recent years. He is a powerful, right-footed left winger who is comfortable playing on his weaker side, giving him a natural tendency to attack central spaces. In addition, he can also operate as a centre-forward when required. Despite his young age, Tavares already stands out physically. His advanced build has allowed him to compete at a high level against opponents two or even three years older. Given all these traits, Barcelona moved quickly once the opportunity arose, determined not to let another promising talent slip away.

## MAJOR BOOST: BARCELONA MIDFIELDER EXPECTED TO RESUME GROUP TRAINING IN NEXT 10 DAYS

**Diary Times Desk :** According to a recent update from MARCA, it has come to light that Barcelona midfielder Gavi has reached an important stage in his recovery and is now back doing work on the pitch. The young midfielder's return is edging closer, and there is growing optimism about his return to training in the coming weeks. Gavi is practically recovered from his injury and is now entering the final phase of his rehabilitation.

Over the past few days, the focus has been on gym-based work to rebuild muscle strength, combined with daily sessions alongside the club's physiotherapy staff. That groundwork has now paid off, with the player returning to field training and resuming running exercises. This step marks a significant moment in his recovery journey and the next objective is reintegration with the group. However, Barcelona are determined not to rush the process. The current plan is for Gavi to begin training with his teammates in around ten days. That timeline points to either the start of next week or the following one.



## BARCELONA HOLD KEY MEETING TO SECURE FUTURE OF STAR PLAYMAKER AMID FOREING INTEREST

**Diary Times Desk :** Fermin Lopez has become a hot topic in the transfer market in the wake of his consistency at Barcelona.

Since his breakthrough, the Spaniard has been a lethal weapon for Barcelona in the final third and his performances have not gone unnoticed either, with several European clubs interested in his services.

Barcelona are well aware of the interest and have already made their first move in the bid to retain the services of Fermin. A recent report from Diario SPORT has offered an update on the future of Fermin Lopez, suggesting that Barcelona had a meeting with the player's agents yesterday.

The Catalans informed their desire to keep hold of Fermin's services in the years to come, with the club even prepared to significantly increase the player's salary.

Barcelona's plan is to renew Fermin's contract for another two years. This could see his current deal at Camp Nou, which runs until 2029, extend till 2031.

## PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE VOWS TO 'CALL LIONEL MESSI FIRST' IF ELECTED BARCELONA PRESIDENT

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona presidential candidate Victor Font has made one of the strongest statements of the campaign so far, publicly promising that his first act as president would be to call Lionel Messi.

The declaration comes as Font intensifies his campaign ahead of the club's presidential elections, which will be held on March 15. The election date was recently confirmed by the board of directors of FC Barcelona, a decision that Font acknowledged while also questioning the timing.

Speaking about the process, he explained the position of his candidacy regarding participation and logistics.

"We wanted the elections to be held as soon as possible, but we also wanted the chosen date to guarantee maximum participation. "From a competitive standpoint, we don't like it, but we are ready to go for this opportunity. If there is a game that day, we ask that all seats at Spotify Camp Nou be made available to members," he said, as per SPORT.