

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**'YOU CAN'T PLAY WITH DATA OF INDIANS': SC SLAMS META, WHATSAPP OVER PRIVACY POLICY**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Tuesday slammed global tech giants Meta Platforms Inc and WhatsApp for playing with the right to privacy of Indian citizens in the name of data sharing and allegedly committing theft of private information of customers, creating a monopoly in the market. "You cannot play with the right to privacy of citizens of this country in the name of data sharing... We will not allow you to share a single word of the data. Either you give an undertaking or we will have to pass an order. You cannot violate the right to privacy of citizens," a bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said. While hearing appeals of Meta and WhatsApp challenging a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore over the privacy policy, the bench highlighted the unavailability of any clear option for a WhatsApp user to opt out of such a privacy policy.

**FATAL FALL OF MINOR IN BENGALURU: PUB OWNER, STAFF BOOKED FOR SERVING ALCOHOL TO HIM**

**Diary Times Desk :** The owner and staff of a pub here have been booked for allegedly serving alcohol to a 15-year-old boy who fell from the seventh floor of an apartment building and died, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred at an apartment located on Dr Vishnuvardhan Road on the night of January 31, they said. The action was taken based on a complaint filed by the boy's father, police said. According to police, the complainant claimed that at around 9.40 pm on January 31, his 15-year-old minor son, fell from the seventh floor of the apartment, where he was residing, and died. In this regard, a case has been registered at the Rajarajeshwari Nagar police station. "During the course of investigation, the police examined the matter from various angles and found that on January 31, the deceased minor, along with his friends, had consumed alcohol and smoked at the establishment (pub).

**INDIA-US TRADE DEAL**

**JOINT STATEMENT ON INDIA-US TRADE DEAL BEING FINALISED; AGRI, DAIRY SECTORS PROTECTED: PIYUSH GOYAL**



**Diary Times Desk :** A joint statement on the India-US trade deal will be issued shortly once technical details are inked, Commerce minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday. Goyal said India's interests have been fully protected in the deal and echoed by US ambassador Sergio Cor, who has described the deal as one with limitless possibilities.

Goyal said all sensitive sectors in agriculture and dairy have been protected and all segments of Indian society will benefit from the agreement. The minister condemned Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, for disruptions in Parliament and said the government intended to make a statement on the deal in either of the two Houses.

"But because of constant disruptions caused by Rahul Gandhi and leaders of SP, TMC and DMK, I have had to come and make a statement outside," said Goyal. He said the deal will open opportunities for several sectors and India's interests will not be compromised in any way.

"We will shortly issue a joint statement by both the countries. As soon as the final understanding is reached, the joint statement inked and technical details are completed, we will issue the statement.

"I can assure you this is a deal that will make all Indians proud and protect the interests of every Indian and provide opportunity for all. Agriculture and dairy sector interests will be protected," Goyal said.

The commerce minister dismissed charges of the Congress on the deal being announced by US President Donald Trump, saying, "The reciprocal tariff was imposed by the US do the move to reduce it also needed to be announced by them only, it is natural."

**INDIA TO RESTRICT RUSSIAN OIL BUY, IMPORT ONLY WHERE SUPPLIES ARE IRREPLACEABLE: SOURCES**

**Diary Times Desk :** India will restrict crude oil purchases from Russia as part of an agreement reached with the US in exchange for lower trade tariffs, sources said, adding that imports will continue for now by refiners such as Nayara Energy, which have no other alternative source. US President Donald Trump announced overnight that the United States will cut the reciprocal tariff on imports of Indian goods to 18 per cent from 25 per cent under a broader bilateral understanding.



According to him, this came after India agreed to stop buying Russian oil, reduce its tariff and non-tariff barriers against the US, and commit to purchasing an additional USD 500 billion worth of US energy, technology, agricultural products, coal and other goods over time. The commitment to halt Russian oil purchases removes the additional 25 per cent punitive tariff earlier imposed, effectively lowering the applied US tariff on Indian exports to 18 per cent from 50 per cent, providing substantial relief to Indian exporters.

Indian refiners, which became the world's second biggest buyer of Russian oil after it became available at a discount post Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, will continue to honour the purchase commitments made prior to the announcement but will not place new orders thereafter, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

**BJP LEADER Y KHEMCHAND SINGH TO BE NEXT MANIPUR CM; WOMAN KUKI LEADER TO BE DEPUTY CM**



**Diary Times Desk :** Former minister Y Khemchand Singh was elected the leader of the NDA legislature party in Manipur on Tuesday, paving the way for the formation of a new government in the northeastern state with him as chief minister.

Nemcha Kipgen, a woman Kuki leader and former minister, is likely to be the deputy chief minister in the new Manipur government when it is formed, sources said. The BJP legislature party of Manipur elected 62-year-old Singh as its leader at a meeting held at the BJP headquarters here. It was attended by 35 of the 37 BJP MLAs, besides the party's central observer Tarun Chugh, its northeast in-charge Sambit Patra, and BJP state president A Sharda Devi, among others. Kipgen (60) was also chosen to be the deputy chief minister in the new government. The two BJP MLAs who did not attend the meeting were unwell. Subsequently, another meeting was held at the Manipur Bhavan, where MLAs of NDA constituents in Manipur -- six of National People's Party (NPP), five of Naga People's Front (NPF) and three Independents -- and BJP legislators were in attendance. They endorsed Singh as the leader and Kipgen as the deputy leader of the NDA legislature party.

**PIYUSH GOYAL SLAMS RAHUL GANDHI'S 'NEGATIVE MENTALITY' OVER INDIA-US TRADE DEAL OPPOSITION**



**Diary Times Desk :** Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal launched a scathing attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday, accusing him of opposing India's progress and casting doubts on the country's institutions. Addressing a press conference, hours after the India-US trade agreement, Goyal said the Leader of Opposition (LOP) in Lok Sabha was trying to mislead the country about the deal, adding that Gandhi has nothing to do with India's progress.

"It is a great misfortune that negative-minded leaders like Rahul Gandhi are trying to mislead or confuse the country today. I condemn Rahul Gandhi's lies and deceit. He wants to mislead people, but it won't work. The country is moving forward," Goyal said. Goyal said he was keen to speak about the deal in Parliament, but the Congress and opposition leaders didn't let him do so. He questioned Gandhi's resistance to an agreement that the government believes will help several sectors of the Indian economy.

"We all saw that shameful scene, but normally, we would have wanted to discuss this in Parliament. The way the opposition acted so shamefully in Parliament today, particularly the Congress party led by Rahul Gandhi and their allies, DMK, TMC, and the Samajwadi Party, they even insulted the Speaker when they got to his chair. I vehemently disagree with Rahul Gandhi and the opposition," he said.

**US TARIFF CUT**

**PREMATURE TO ASSESS IF US TARIFF CUT IN INDIA'S INTEREST: MAYAWATI**



**Diary Times Desk :** Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati on Tuesday said it would be premature to determine whether the United States' decision to impose an 18 per cent tariff on Indian goods is in the country's interest, noting that the complete details of the agreement are yet to be made public.

Her remarks came after US President Donald Trump announced the trade deal following a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday. Under the agreement, the US will reduce the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the earlier cumulative level of 50 per cent.

Reacting to the development, Mayawati cautioned against drawing quick conclusions, stating that any assessment without adequate information would be hasty. She said the actual impact of the decision can only be understood after it is implemented on the ground. "After mutual agreements between India and the United States with several conditions, news of the US imposing an 18 per cent tariff, whether it is in the interest of the nation.

**CRICKET BODIES SHOULD HAVE EX-CRICKETERS, NOT THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HOW TO HOLD A BAT: SC**



**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed displeasure over the management of sports bodies by non-experts, saying that cricket associations should be led by retired cricketers rather than individuals who "do not even know how to handle a bat".

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi refused to tinker with the Bombay High Court order that had stayed Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) election, originally scheduled for January 6, citing allegations of "nepotism and favouritism".

The bench was hearing pleas including the one filed by MCA against the high court order. During the proceedings, the CJI questioned the sudden surge in MCA's membership. Pointing to the records, the bench noted that the association had 164 members between 1986 and 2023, but saw a massive influx of new members immediately thereafter.

**Y KHEMCHAND SINGH ELECTED MANIPUR BJP LEGISLATURE PARTY LEADER; WOMAN KUKI LEADER TO BE DEPUTY CM**



**Diary Times Desk :** Y Khemchand Singh was elected as the leader of the BJP legislature party in Manipur on Tuesday, paving the way for the formation of a popular government in the northeastern state with him as chief minister. Nemcha Kipgen, a woman Kuki leader and former minister, is likely to be the deputy chief minister in the new Manipur government when it is formed, sources said. A meeting of the legislators of all constituents of the National Democratic Alliance will be held on Tuesday night, where Singh and Kipgen's names are expected to be endorsed. Sources said Singh, a former minister, was elected as leader of the Manipur legislature party at a meeting of BJP MLAs held at the party headquarters here. Except for two BJP MLAs, who are unwell, all other party legislators attended the meeting. Former chief minister N Biren Singh, Assembly speaker Satyabrata Singh, BJP state president A Sharda Devi, the party's central observer Tarun Chugh and its northeast in-charge Sambit Patra, among others, were present at the meeting. The legislature party meeting was held days ahead of the expiry of the second spell of the President's rule on February 12.

**B 787 FUEL SWITCH: AI FLIGHT FLOWN AFTER PHYSICAL CHECKS, NO ABNORMAL PARAMETERS NOTICED: DGCA**

**Diary Times Desk :** Aviation regulator DGCA on Tuesday said Air India's Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, which faced fuel control switch glitch, took off from London on February 1 after the crew carried out a physical check of the switch and that no abnormal parameters were observed during start of the engine or thereafter. The fuel control switch of the left engine of the aircraft, which operated the flight AI32 to Bengaluru that had more than 200 people on board, did not latch on the 'RUN' position twice during the engine start at London Heathrow and on the third attempt, the switch was properly locked in the 'RUN' position. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) detailed statement explaining the sequence related to the Dreamliner also came against the backdrop of concerns in certain quarters on the aircraft operating the flight despite the fuel control switch issue. On February 1, Air India's Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner VT-ANX faced fuel control switch issue during engine start in London.

**RAJA WARRING, 7 OTHER OPPOSITION MPS SUSPENDED FROM LOK SABHA FOR 'UNRULY BEHAVIOUR'**

**Diary Times Desk :** In escalation of the tussle between the government and the opposition, seven Congress members and one CPI-M MP were suspended from the Lok Sabha on Tuesday for 'unruly behaviour' after they tore papers and threw them at the Chair. Their suspension from the House for the remaining part of the Budget Session that concludes on April 2 will intensify the face-off with the government over various issues, including Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi being denied an opportunity to cite an article based on excerpts from an unpublished 'memoir' of former Army chief MM Naravane on the India-China conflict of 2020. The opposition have also raised concerns about American President Donald Trump announcing the India-US trade deal and the alleged demolition drive at the Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi. As soon as the House met at 3 pm following multiple adjournments, Dilip Saikia, who was in the Chair, named the eight members. Subsequently, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju read out a resolution seeking suspension of the eight members for the remaining period of the Budget session. The suspended members are Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, C Kiran Kumar Reddy, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Manickam Tagore, Prashant Padole and Dean Kuriakose (all Congress) and S Ventakesan (CPI-M).

**SHIV SENA'S SHARMILA PIMPOLKAR NEW MAYOR OF THANE**

**Diary Times Desk :** Sharmila Pimpolkar of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena was on Tuesday elected unopposed as the 23<sup>rd</sup> mayor of Thane at a special general body meeting of the civic body, formally replacing the state government-appointed administrator after four years. BJP's Krishna Patil was elected as the Deputy Mayor. There were no other nominations filed for the posts, paving the way for their unopposed election. "To manage internal ambitions within the Mahayuti alliance, Shiv Sena and BJP have introduced a rotation formula, according to which the term for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor has been set at 15 months," a Sena leader said. This arrangement is made to satisfy the elected members, giving a chance to as many as four different corporators to serve in each role over the full term, he added. The civic headquarters transformed into a site of celebration, with women clad in traditional Maharashtrian attire performing a lezim dance. A huge statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was installed above the entrance corridor of the Thane Municipal Corporation, which drew significant attention from onlookers and officials alike.

**CRICKET BODIES SHOULD HAVE EX-CRICKETERS, NOT THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HOW TO HOLD BAT: SC**



**Diary Times Desk :** The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed displeasure over the management of sports bodies by non-experts, saying that cricket associations should be led by retired cricketers rather than individuals who "do not even know how to handle a bat". A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, and Justices Joyimalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi refused to tinker with the Bombay High Court order that had stayed Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) election, originally scheduled for January 6, citing allegations of "nepotism and favouritism". The bench was hearing pleas including the one filed by MCA against the high court order. During the proceedings, the CJ questioned the sudden surge in MCA's membership. Pointing to the records, the bench noted that the association had 164 members between 1986 and 2023, but saw a massive influx of new members immediately thereafter. "From 1986 to 2023, you had 164 members, and from 2023 onwards, you made a bumper draw?" the CJ asked. Representing the petitioners, including MCA and NCP-SP MLA Rohit Pawar, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi submitted that a committee headed by a retired judge had overseen the process, rejecting 48 members while inducing others.

**DRDO SUCCESSFULLY TESTS SOLID FUEL DUCTED RAMJET TECH, PAVING WAY FOR LONG-RANGE AIR MISSILES**

**Diary Times Desk :** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) carried out a successful demonstration of the Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, off the coast of Odisha, on February 3. This is part of a project to design a long-range air missile that can hit targets at 350 km. The successful demonstration places India into an elite league of nations possessing this technology that enables developing long-range air-to-air missiles to give tactical edge over the adversaries, DRDO said. All the subsystems including nozzle-less booster, solid fuel ducted ramjet motor and fuel flow controller performed as per expectations after being initially propelled by a ground booster motor to the desired Mach number. According to technical literature available on the subject, SFDR is a missile propulsion system that includes a 'thrust modulated ducted rocket' with a reduced smoke nozzle-less missile booster. Thrust modulation is achieved using a hot gas flow controller and the system utilises a solid fuelled air-breathing ramjet engine. Unlike a solid-propellant rocket, the ramjet takes up oxygen from the atmosphere during flight

## 'THIS IS THE POINT': INDIAN JAWAN'S HEARTWARMING REUNION WITH KIDS GOES VIRAL

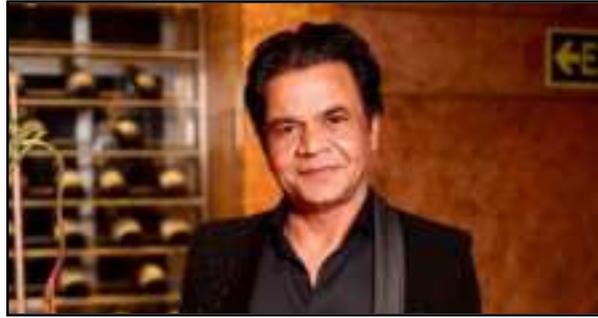
**Diary Times Desk** : A viral video has captured the essence of 'the point' — a moment that reminds us what life is truly about. An Indian Army Jawan's wholesome reunion with his kids at a railway station has left the internet in tears. Still in uniform, the officer's joy was palpable as he showered his kids with kisses and hugs, reminding us that family and happiness are indeed 'the point'. The video, shared online, shows the emotional contrast between the Jawan's duty and his role as a father. As he finally holds his kids, the love and joy are palpable, making us appreciate the sacrifices made by our armed forces.

## BOAT CAPSIZES IN MAHISAGAR RIVER IN VADODARA; ALL 10 PASSENGERS RESCUED

**Diary Times Desk** : A small wooden boat ferrying people capsized in the Mahisagar river in Gujarat's Vadodara district on Tuesday, following which locals rescued all 10 passengers on board, police said. The Mahisagar river flows between Mujpur village in Padra taluka of Vadodara and Gambhira in Kheda district on the opposite side. On Tuesday morning, nearly 10 passengers boarded a small boat from the Mujpur side to reach Gambhira, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Vadodara Rural, Akash Patel said. "All ten passengers were rescued by locals after the boat overturned near the riverbank due to some unknown reasons.

No one was injured or died in the incident," Patel said. On July 9, 2025, a portion of a bridge connecting Mujpur and Gambhira collapsed, resulting in the death of 22 persons as several vehicles plunged into the river. As the bridge has been shut for traffic following the incident, commuters are relying on boats to travel between Mujpur and Gambhira to avoid an additional road travel of nearly 50 km, former Padra Congress MLA Jashpalsinh Padhiyar said. After learning about the boat capsizing incident, Padra mamlatdar (revenue officer) along with Padhiyar and other local leaders rushed to the spot. The Congress leader appealed to the government to start the bridge for at least small vehicles so that daily commuters do not have to use boats to cross the river. "Since the bridge is totally shut for traffic after the incident, residents of nearby villages travelling between the two districts have been forced to take a lengthy detour of around 50 km. To avoid the long journey by road, they are relying on these small boats to cross the river," he said.

## DELHI HC DIRECTS ACTOR RAJPAL YADAV TO SURRENDER IN CHEQUE BOUNCE CASES



**Diary Times Desk** : The Delhi High Court has directed actor Rajpal Yadav to surrender before jail authorities by February 4 in connection with his conviction in cheque bounce cases. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma observed that Yadav's conduct deserved to be deprecated as he repeatedly breached his undertakings to the court to repay the amount to the complainant M/s Murali Projects Pvt Ltd. The judge noted that Yadav was required to make payment of Rs 1.35 crore in each of the seven cases against him, and directed that the amount already deposited with the Registrar General of the high court be released in favour of the complainant. In October 2025, two demand drafts (DDs) of Rs 75 lakh were deposited with the Registrar General, and an amount of Rs 9 crore remained payable, the court noted in the order. "Despite repeatedly giving assurances and seeking indulgence of this court, the petitioner no. 1 has failed to comply with the orders passed from time to time.

## PREMATURE TO ASSESS IF US TARIFF CUT IN INDIA'S INTEREST: MAYAWATI

**Diary Times Desk** : Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati on Tuesday said it would be premature to determine whether the United States' decision to impose an 18 per cent tariff on Indian goods is in the country's interest, noting that the complete details of the agreement are yet to be made public. Her remarks came after US President Donald Trump announced the trade deal following a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday. Under the agreement, the US will reduce the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the earlier cumulative level of 50 per cent. Reacting to the development, Mayawati cautioned against drawing quick conclusions, stating that any assessment without adequate information would be hasty. She said the actual impact of the decision can only be understood after it is implemented on the ground. "After mutual agreements between India and the United States with several conditions, news of the US imposing an 18 per cent tariff.

## INDIA-US TRADE DEAL HAS ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS TO PROTECT INTERESTS OF MARGINAL FARMERS: CHOUHAN

**Diary Times Desk** : Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday asserted adequate safeguards are built in to protect sensitive sectors, such as agriculture and dairy, from unfair competition under the India-US free trade deal. He was responding to reports of farmer organisations fearing that the India-US deal may adversely affect Indian agriculture and the dairy sector by exposing small and marginal farmers to unfair competition. Speaking in the Lok Sabha, the minister noted that issues relating to farmers are addressed proactively and expeditiously by the ruling dispensation to ensure their socio-economic well-being. "India is a net agricultural exporter. The government undertakes negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs) only after carefully safeguarding the interests of Indian agriculture, allied sectors, and farmers, including small and marginal farmers. Adequate safeguards are built in to protect sensitive sectors such as agriculture and dairy from unfair competition," he said. The remarks come in view of US Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announcing that the "new US-India deal" would allow greater exports of American farm products into India, describing it as a major win for American farmers and rural communities.

## INDIAN NEWSPAPER SOCIETY VOICES CONCERN OVER PERSISTENT SHORTFALL OF NEWSPRINT

**Diary Times Desk** : The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) on Tuesday expressed serious concern over the persistent shortfall of newsprint in the country, saying the gap has forced newspaper publishers to increasingly depend on imports. "India's annual newsprint consumption is around 1.2 million tonnes, while domestic production has struggled to cross 0.5 million tonnes. As a result, Indian mills are able to meet only about 40 per cent of total demand, underscoring a major 'hollowing out' of the industry," the INS said in a statement. The apex body of newspaper publishers noted that the demand-supply gap has continued for more than two decades, with no significant expansion in dedicated newsprint manufacturing capacity during this period. "Owing to this structural constraint, newspaper publishers are compelled to rely on imports to ensure uninterrupted supply and distribution, which remains essential for informed public discourse in the country," the INS said.

## 'RELIEF FOR OUR EXPORTERS': OMAR ABDULLAH WELCOMES US' TARIFF CUT ON INDIAN GOODS

**Diary Times Desk** : Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday welcomed the US government's decision to bring down reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods, saying this would bring relief to many exporters in the country who were facing difficulties in view of the increased tariff. US President Donald Trump on Monday announced that India and the US have agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will reduce the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent. The announcement is crucial for India as the US imposed a steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering American markets from August 27, 2025. "These tariffs were proving to be quite burdensome for us, and we also know very well why these tariffs were imposed. The United States was not happy with the fact that we buy oil from Russia. Trump announced that the Indian government has now stopped purchasing oil from Russia, and because of that.



### US TRADE DEAL DONE; WILL CUT TARIFF FROM 50% TO 18%, SAYS TRUMP



**Diary Times Desk :** US President Donald Trump on Monday claimed that Washington and New Delhi had agreed to a trade deal under which reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US on Indian goods would be reduced to 18 per cent from 50 per cent, following a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 25 per cent penal tariff, which the US had imposed on India for buying Russian crude oil, has been dissolved, US embassy spokesperson Chris Elms confirmed. Shortly after Trump's social media post, Prime Minister Modi welcomed the tariff reduction, calling it a positive development for bilateral ties. In a post on X, Modi said he was "delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent" and thanked Trump "on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India" for the announcement. "When two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits our people and unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation," Modi said, adding that he looked forward to taking the India-US partnership "to unprecedented heights". US Ambassador to India Sergio Gorr, who was the first one to inform about the Modi-Trump phone call, said the two leaders were expected to meet in the coming months. Trump, in his post, said they discussed trade as well as the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. He described Modi as a "powerful and respected leader" and claimed that India had agreed to stop buying Russian oil and instead increase purchases of energy and other goods from the US and, "potentially, Venezuela".

### HEARD NO STATEMENTS FROM INDIA ON HALTING RUSSIAN OIL PURCHASES: KREMLIN



**Diary Times Desk :** The Kremlin said on Tuesday it had heard no statements from India about halting purchases of Russian oil after US President Donald Trump said New Delhi had agreed to stop such purchases as part of a trade accord with Washington. US President Donald Trump announced a trade deal on Monday with India that slashes U.S. tariffs on Indian goods to 18% from 50% in exchange for India halting Russian oil purchases and lowering trade barriers. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia was carefully analysing Trump's remarks on relations with India. Asked directly if India had decided to stop buying Russian oil, Peskov said: "So far, we have not heard any statements from Delhi on this issue." "We respect bilateral US-Indian relations," Peskov told reporters. "But we attach no less importance to the development of an advanced strategic partnership between Russia and India."

### SPAIN TO BAN SOCIAL MEDIA ACCESS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 16

**Diary Times Desk :** Spain will ban access to social media for minors under 16 and platforms will be required to implement age verification systems, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Tuesday at the World Government Summit in Dubai. "Our children are exposed to a space they were never meant to navigate alone... We will no longer accept that," Sanchez said. "We will protect them from the digital Wild West." He added that his government would also introduce a new bill next week to hold social media executives accountable for illegal and hateful content. Australia in December became the first country to ban social media for children under 16. It's a move being closely watched by other countries considering similar age-based measures, such as Britain and France.

### CHINA TO BAN 'HIDDEN' CAR DOOR HANDLES FROM 2027 TO ADDRESS SAFETY FEARS

**Diary Times Desk :** China will ban 'hidden' car door handles from 2027, becoming the first country to phase out a design pioneered by Tesla and adopted by Chinese competitors, including Xiaomi. The hidden handle design, which functions through a key fob or mobile phone or by manually pressing it, has drawn scrutiny in both the United States and China over potential safety risks. Last year, the US auto safety agency opened a defect probe into Tesla Model 3 sedan's emergency door release controls. Tesla, which did not comment on the investigation at the time, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday. China's industry ministry said on Monday that under its new safety technical requirements, every car door should be equipped with both exterior and interior handles. Mechanical release designs will be mandatory, with innovations such as electrical handles optional. China's new policy sets out rules for where handles must be located on the outside of a car and how they should function to ensure that they can be opened in the event of an accident. It also requires interior handles to be clearly visible.



### WORLD BANK PRESIDENT AJAY BANGA VISITS ANCESTRAL HOME IN PAKISTAN'S PUNJAB

**Diary Times Desk :** As part of his visit to Pakistan, World Bank (WB) President Ajay Pal Singh Banga visited his ancestral home in Khushab district of Punjab province on Tuesday. Banga reached 'Gali Sikhian wali' in Khushab, a town in Punjab, Pakistan, located near the Jhelum River between Sargodha and Mianwali. It is also known as the "City of Soldiers" for its contribution to the armed forces. On his arrival, Banga was received by Chairman Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), Khushab, Qamar Zaman, Additional Secretary Shrines Nasir Mushtaq, along with the local administrative officials. Incidentally, Banga's father, Harbhajan Singh Banga, a retired lieutenant-general who served in the Indian Army, grew up in this place. Talking to The Tribune on the phone, Nasir Mushtaq said Banga's visit was an epitome of a message of peace and cultural connection.

### 13-YEAR-OLD BOY SWIMS FOR HOURS TO SAVE FAMILY SWEPT OUT TO SEA

**Diary Times Desk :** A 13-year-old boy is credited with saving the lives of his mother and two younger siblings with an hourslong swim after the family was swept out to sea off the Australian coast. Austin Appelbee swam 4 km to shore to raise the alarm after he got into difficulties on Friday with his mother Joanne Appelbee, 47, brother Beau, 12 and sister Grace, 8, police said. Austin said he initially set off for help on an inflatable kayak that was taking water. He abandoned the kayak then took off his life jacket because it impeded his swimming. He said he tried to focus on positive thoughts as he swam for around four hours through rough seas for shore, raising the alarm at 6 pm. "The waves are massive and I have no life jacket on... I just kept thinking just keep swimming, just keep swimming," Austin said on Tuesday. "And then I finally I made it to shore and I hit the bottom of the beach and I just collapsed." The family, from the state capital Perth, were on vacation and were using kayaks and paddle boards hired from their hotel around noon when rough ocean and wind conditions started dragging them out to sea. A search helicopter found the mom and two children wearing life jackets and clinging to a paddleboard at 8:30 pm, police said. They had drifted 14 km from Quindalup in Western Australia state, after spending up to 10 hours in the water. "The actions of the 13-year-old boy cannot be praised highly enough — his determination and courage ultimately saved the lives of his mother and siblings," Police Inspector James Bradley said.

## RUSSIA FIRES 450 DRONES AND 70 MISSILES AT UKRAINE, DAY BEFORE US-BROKERED TALKS

**Diary Times Desk :** Russia fired around 450 long-range drones and 70 missiles of various types at Ukraine in a major attack overnight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday. The barrage came a day before the two countries were due to attend US-brokered talks in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on ending the all-out war, which Russia launched nearly four years ago. The bombardment of at least five regions of Ukraine specifically took aim at the power grid, Zelenskyy said, as part of Moscow's ongoing campaign to deny civilians light, heating and running water amid the coldest winter in years. At least 10 people were wounded, officials said. "Taking advantage of the coldest days of winter to terrorize people is more important to Russia than diplomacy," Zelenskyy said. He urged allies to send more air defense supplies and bring "maximum pressure" to bear on Russia to end its full-scale invasion, which began on February 24, 2022. Officials have described recent talks between Moscow and Kyiv delegations as constructive. But after a year of efforts, the Trump administration is still searching for a breakthrough on key issues such as who keeps the Ukrainian land that Russia's army has occupied, and a comprehensive settlement appears distant. The Abu Dhabi talks were scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday. Russia has tried to wear down Ukrainians' appetite for the fight by creating hardship for the civilian population. It has tried to wreck Ukraine's electricity network, targeting substations, transformers, turbines and generators at power plants. Ukraine's largest private power company, DTEK, said that the overnight attack hit its thermal power plants in the ninth major assault since October.



## BILL, HILLARY CLINTON TO TESTIFY BEFORE US HOUSE IN EPSTEIN PROBE

**Diary Times Desk :** Former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton agreed late Monday to testify in a House investigation into convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, but the Republican leading the probe said an agreement had not yet been finalised. Rep James Comer, the chair of the House Oversight Committee, was advancing criminal contempt of Congress charges against both Clintons on Monday evening for defying a congressional subpoena when attorneys for the Clintons emailed staff for the Oversight panel, saying the pair would accept Comer's demands and "will appear for depositions on mutually agreeable dates." The attorneys requested that Comer agree not to move forward with the contempt proceedings. Comer, however, said he was not immediately dropping the charges, which would carry the threat of a substantial fine.

**Diary Times Desk :** The US Justice Department's release of millions of internal documents related to Jeffrey Epstein has revealed the late financier and sex offender's ties to many prominent people in politics, finance, academia and business - both before and after he pleaded guilty in 2008 to prostitution charges, including soliciting an underage girl. Evidence in multiple legal and criminal cases has also shed light on these connections. Epstein was arrested again in 2019 on federal charges of sex trafficking of minors. His 2019 death in a Manhattan jail cell was ruled a suicide. The Justice Department has warned that the material could include faked images or untrue allegations, as well as pornographic material. On Monday, the Department said it had removed several thousand documents that inadvertently identified some of Epstein's victims. The Justice Department's No. 2 official, Todd Blanche.

## NASA TARGETS MARCH LAUNCH OF MOON ROCKET AFTER TEST RUN REVEALS FUEL LEAKS

**Diary Times Desk :** NASA said on Tuesday it will now target a March launch of its new moon rocket after running into exasperating fuel leaks during a make-or-break test a day earlier. The space agency said in a statement that the launch delay will "allow teams to review data and conduct a second wet dress rehearsal" before the flight test. The leaks - reminiscent of the rocket's delayed debut three years ago - sprang just a couple hours into the daylong fueling operation Monday at Kennedy Space Centre and called into question how soon astronauts could take off. NASA said the four astronauts tasked for the flight will be moved out of their nearly two-week quarantine. NASA added that they will enter quarantine again "about two weeks" before the next launch window for the trip around the moon. The agency gave no indication of an official launch target in March, saying teams need to first "fully review data from the test, mitigate each issue, and return to testing."



## SOUTH AFRICA DEPLOYS FRIGATE TO INDIA FOR MULTILATERAL NAVAL EXERCISE

**Diary Times Desk :** The South African Navy's frigate SAS AMATOLA has commenced a strategically significant deployment to India, where it will represent South Africa at the 2026 International Fleet Review and Exercise MILAN, hosted by the Indian Navy. "SAS Amatola's voyage to India is significant on multiple levels," the South African Navy (SAN) said in a statement after the frigate departed on Sunday. "This deployment marks an important milestone for South Africa's maritime posture, reaffirming the SAN's role as an active contributor to multilateral naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. It also reflects a measured return to long-range deployments, undertaken with careful planning, disciplined prioritisation and professional resolve." "The deployment includes participation in the Indian Navy's International Fleet Review (IFR) and Exercise MILAN, a large multilateral naval exercise emphasising interoperability, maritime security operations, and strategic dialogue among participating nations," SAN said. "These events convene naval forces from multiple participating countries, focusing on shared responsibilities for safety, stability, and cooperation across the Indian Ocean Region," SAN said.

## TRIAL OF SON OF NORWAY'S CROWN PRINCESS ON RAPE, OTHER CHARGES OPENING IN OSLO

**Diary Times Desk :** The son of Norway's crown princess is going on trial Tuesday on charges that include rape, opening proceedings that are expected to last several weeks in a case that has cast a shadow on the royal family's image. Marius Borg Hoiby, 29, is the eldest son of Crown Princess Mette-Marit from a previous relationship and the stepson of the heir to the throne, Crown Prince Haakon. He has no royal title or official duties. Hoiby has been under scrutiny since he was repeatedly arrested in 2024 on various allegations of wrongdoing. He was indicted in August but was free pending trial until Sunday, when police said he was arrested over new allegations of assault, threats with a knife and violation of a restraining order. The Oslo district court on Monday granted their request to keep him in detention for up to four weeks on the grounds of a risk of reoffending. Defence lawyer Petar Sekulic said the arrest followed an alleged "incident" involving another person on Sunday. He declined to give details, but said Hoiby contests his detention and his legal team was considering an appeal as soon as he and the other person can provide statements to police. In the trial opening on Tuesday at the Oslo court.

## SPACEX ACQUIRES XAI IN RECORD-SETTING DEAL AS MUSK LOOKS TO UNIFY AI, SPACE AMBITIONS

**Diary Times Desk :** Elon Musk said on Monday that SpaceX has acquired his artificial-intelligence startup xAI in a record-setting deal that unifies Musk's AI and space ambitions by combining the rocket-and-satellite company with the maker of the Grok chatbot. The deal, first reported by Reuters last week, represents one of the most ambitious tie-ups in the technology sector yet, combining a space-and-defence contractor with a fast-growing AI developer whose costs are largely driven by chips, data centers and energy. It could also bolster SpaceX's data-center ambitions as Musk competes with rivals like Alphabet's Google, Meta, Amazon-backed Anthropic and OpenAI in the AI sector. The transaction values SpaceX at \$1 trillion, and xAI at \$250 billion, according to a person familiar with the matter. Investors in xAI will receive 0.1433 shares of SpaceX for every share of xAI as part of the acquisition, this person said. Some xAI executives may also opt for cash instead of SpaceX stock at \$75.46 per share, the person said.



## KASHMIR SOLIDARITY DAY RINGS HOLLOW AS POJK FACES SEVERE ELECTRICITY CRISIS

**Diary Times Desk :** As Pakistan prepares to mark "Kashmir Solidarity Day" on February 5 with slogans, rallies and official statements expressing concern for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, large parts of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) continue to face prolonged electricity outages, leaving residents struggling amid harsh winter conditions. While Islamabad projects concern for Kashmiris on international platforms, residents in the territory it controls are struggling to survive harsh winter conditions amid prolonged power outages. In PoJK, electricity has become a luxury rather than a right. A crumbling power distribution system, chronic mismanagement, and unchecked electricity theft have left communities in darkness, especially during the peak winter season when reliable power is critical for heating and survival. Sub-zero temperatures, coupled with repeated grid failures after snowfall, have turned daily life into a hardship for thousands of families.

## INDIGO CANCELS FLIGHTS FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN

**Diary Times Desk :** IndiGo on Tuesday issued a travel advisory following developments in Iran and adjusted its flight schedule to ensure a "safe and seamless" experience for customers and crew. In a post on X, IndiGo noted that its flights to and from Tbilisi, Almaty, Baku, and Tashkent have been cancelled until February 28. "Travel Advisory- In view of the developing situation around Iran, we have made additional adjustments to our flight schedule to ensure a safe and seamless experience for our customers and crew. As part of these measures, IndiGo flights to and from Tbilisi, Almaty, Baku, and Tashkent have been cancelled until February 28, 2026. Customers may visit <https://bit.ly/4rnkK5G> to explore alternate travel options or opt for a full refund, as per their preference. As the situation continues to evolve, our plans remain under regular review. Any further updates or changes will be shared through our communication channels.

## INDIA, US LIKELY TO ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT ON TRADE AGREEMENT THIS WEEK: GOVT SOURCES



**Diary Times Desk :** India and the US are likely to issue a joint statement on the trade agreement this week, according to government sources. "We are under final stages of detailing with the negotiating team. A joint statement of the India-US trade deal is likely to be issued this week," said the source. The deal involves reducing reciprocal tariffs from 25% to 18% and eliminating the additional 25% duty on Russian oil imports into India. India has also agreed to increase imports from the US by \$500 billion, covering sectors like energy, technology, agriculture, and defence. The agreement will boost India's export competitiveness, attract investments, and strengthen economic ties with the US. Earlier on Tuesday, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that the India-US Trade Agreement brings tremendous opportunity to the country and is the best deal India has received compared to all its neighbours. Addressing a press conference a day after the India-US trade deal was announced, Goyal said that India's interests have been prioritised. "We all know that the Prime Minister, leveraging his friendly relationship and close ties with President Trump, has finalised a trade deal with the United States of America.

## BALOCH ACTIVIST CHALLENGES PAKISTAN'S CLAIMS OF SUCCESS IN BALOCHISTAN OPERATIONS

**Diary Times Desk :** A leading Baloch activist has challenged Pakistan's assertions of operational success in Balochistan, saying the state is masking an ongoing conflict and targeting civilians instead of addressing political grievances. Hakeem Baloch, Focal Person of the Baloch National Movement's Foreign Department, dismissed Islamabad's claim of killing over 140 militants in recent coordinated operations. He said the Pakistani government has failed to quell the conflict or address what it labels a "low-level insurgency." "Pakistan is neither able to stop the intensity of the war in Balochistan nor does it have effective intelligence," Hakeem Baloch said. He added, "Baloch fighters arrive, carry out attacks, successfully achieve their objectives, and then leave. After that, the Pakistani state detains ordinary Baloch civilians, unarmed people, political workers, forcing them into enforced disappearances. This includes Baloch activists, political workers, human rights activists, Baloch leaders, or their family members, who are abducted as a form of collective punishment."

## SIKYONG PENPA TSERING MEETS US LAWMAKERS AT CAPITOL HILL TO DISCUSS DALAI LAMA'S SUCCESSION

**Diary Times Desk :** Penpa Tsering, the current Sikyong (political leader) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), also known as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, continued his advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, holding meetings with senior members of the US House of Representatives to advance international support for Tibet, reported CTA. The CTA said the Sikyong, accompanied by staff of the Office of Tibet in Washington, DC, and the International Campaign for Tibet, met with Congressman Jim McGovern, Congressman James R. Walkinshaw, and Congressman Joe Wilson. During the meetings, the Central Tibetan Administration reported, Sikyong Penpa Tsering underscored the importance of credible scholarly research in challenging China's historical claims over Tibet. He highlighted Professor Hon-Shiang Lau's book, based on imperial Chinese records, which demonstrates that Tibet has never been part of China since antiquity. According to the CTA, copies of the book were presented to each lawmaker. The Sikyong noted that while the English edition was released last week, the Chinese edition.

## "FULL CREDIT TO GO TO PM MODI": RAJYA SABHA MP SHRINGLA ON "HISTORIC" INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

**Diary Times Desk :** Former Foreign Secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Harsh V Shringla on Tuesday lauded the trade agreement reached between India and the United States, stating that the credit goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for being patient enough to create a conducive environment for the deal. In a social media post today, US President Donald Trump said that both countries agreed to a trade deal under which the US will charge a reduced Reciprocal Tariff, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also in a social media post announced that Made in India products will now have a reduced US tariff of 18% and extended "big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement." Shringla, in a conversation with ANI, said that PM Modi's personal friendship with US President Donald Trump helped clinch the deal. "I think it's a historic deal and the full credit for that has to go to our Prime Minister who has waited patiently to ensure that the best conditions were available before we finalize the deal. It is also attributable to the very strong personal chemistry he enjoys with President Trump and you saw President Trump said he's one of my greatest friends," Shringla said.

## IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER ABBAS ARAGHCHI SAYS TEHRAN READY FOR TALKS BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT, REJECTS PRESSURE DIPLOMACY

**Diary Times Desk :** Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated that Tehran remains open to dialogue grounded in mutual respect but will not engage in negotiations under threats or coercion, Iranian state broadcaster Press TV reported. On Monday, Araghchi made the remarks during a visit to the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini in southern Tehran, where he and senior Foreign Ministry officials renewed their allegiance to the ideals of the founder of the Islamic Republic. Highlighting Iran's long-standing diplomatic stance, Araghchi said, "Iran has always been ready for diplomacy from an equal footing, with mutual respect, and in pursuit of the interests of the Iranian nation." He stressed that respect must be reciprocal, adding, "Anyone who speaks to the Iranian nation with respect will be met with respect, while anyone who resorts to threats and force will be met likewise." The foreign minister further underlined Tehran's position, stating, "Diplomacy is incompatible with pressure, threats, and intimidation, and the Islamic Republic of Iran proceeds along this path with resolve and strength," Press TV reported.

## "HISTORIC VICTORY," WHIT HOUSE DY CHIEF OF STAFF LAUDS INDIA-US DEAL

**Diary Times Desk :** White House Deputy Press Secretary Kush Desai lauded the India-US deal as historic. Desai said that the deal was a victory for all Americans. In a post on X, he said, "The Dealmaker in Chief has secured a trade deal with a fast-growing, top five global economy that's home to over one billion people. Another historic victory for American workers, farmers, and industries." Meanwhile, India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra on Tuesday lauded the India-US deal, saying it would launch vast opportunities for both nations. Kwatra said that the talks between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi herald an exciting new phase in the partnership between both nations. In a post on X, he said, "A big WIN for a consequential partnership under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump. India and USA announce trade deal creating vast new opportunities for the two economies and the people of our two great nations. Today's announcements herald an exciting new phase in our partnership."

## RUSSIA INVITES YOUNG ACTORS FROM BRICS+NATIONS FOR 2026 THEATRE ARTS FELLOWSHIP

**Diary Times Desk :** In 2026, Moscow will once again host young theatre artists from BRICS+ nations for the InterRussia Theatre Arts Fellowship, a cultural and educational exchange initiative aimed at nurturing emerging talent in the performing arts. The programme is organised by the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts (GITIS) in partnership with the Gorchakov Fund, TV BRICS International Media Network, and the Autonomous Non-Profit Organisation "Mezhdunarodniki." It is conducted under Rosstrudnichestvo's flagship "New Generation" project with backing from the Presidential Grants Foundation. The fellowship is intended for advanced students of theatre and film institutions, as well as early-career professional actors. Scheduled to run from August 24 to October 3 in Moscow, the course offers participants the opportunity to immerse themselves in Russian theatrical traditions and contemporary practices.

## ITALIAN ENVOY TO INDIA WELCOMES TRADE DEAL WITH US, DUBS IT "VERY POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT"

**Diary Times Desk :** Antonio Enrico Bartoli, Ambassador of Italy to India said that MoU Signing between Adani Defence and Leonardo is a great marriage and that the collaboration is a part of larger plan between both countries. "Because it's inscribed in a larger plan of collaboration between the two countries. I remind you that there was a defense cooperation agreement in 2023 talking about co-production projects and then the Joint Strategic Action Plan adopted by the two prime ministers puts defense and space in the forefront of our collaboration. So I think it's a piece of a larger story and that's why it's strategic," he said. "So, we have to translate these right and visionary objectives into concrete results. And I think that Leonardo is the best place to, for example in this case, to provide a great collaboration in the sector of light helicopters, where he's leader is the same scheme is to marry the solidity."

## TIBETAN YOUTH CONGRESS CONDEMNS CHINA'S CRITICISM OVER DALAI LAMA'S GRAMMY WIN

**Diary Times Desk :** The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) has strongly criticised China's response to the Dalai Lama's recent Grammy win, calling Beijing's remarks misleading and an attempt to manipulate global opinion. Responding to China's criticism, Tenzin Lobsang, General Secretary of the Tibetan Youth Congress, told ANI, "the Tibetan Youth Congress condemns so called People Republic of China's spokesperson statement where he has labelled his holiness the Dalai Lama as anti China, not religious leader and they have tried to defame his holiness the Dalai Lama but in reality it's completely false... China is trying to erase hundreds years of his holiness Dalai Lama's legacy but it can't be erased. Receiving of the Grammy gives a message at global level. I listened his holiness Dalai Lama's album and it has only few words and compassion is the key element and there is no word like anti China or separatists. So this kind of a small valuable message at the global platform creates an image and China is defending themselves unnecessarily whereas it's a very powerful nonviolent message from a Tibetan." TYC leaders said the Grammy recognition reflects the Dalai Lama's enduring spiritual message and international standing, adding that efforts to undermine his legacy have failed to diminish his global influence. Echoing similar views, Tsamchoe, the organisational secretary of TYC, told ANI, "first of all I would like to extend my congratulations to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama to win the Grammy award. The international recognition reflects his profound spiritual influence."



## FROM CHANDIGARH TO LONDON: PAM KAUR BREAKS HSBC'S 160-YEAR GLASS CEILING

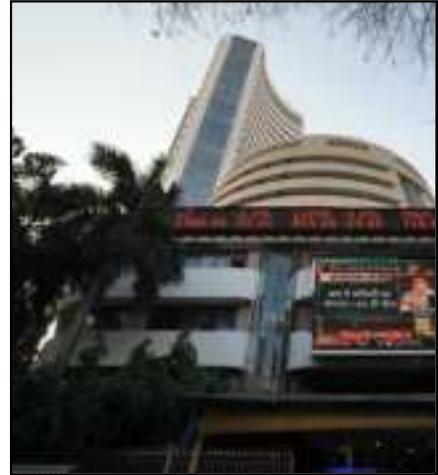
**Diary Times Desk :** From the classrooms of Carmel Convent School and Panjab University to the boardroom of one of the world's largest banks, Pam Kaur's journey is one of quiet determination, global experience, and grounded leadership. In October 2024, she created history by becoming the first woman Group Chief Financial Officer of HSBC in its 160-year history. Deeply connected to her Chandigarh roots, shaped by decades of global banking experience, and guided by discipline and purpose, Kaur today steers the financial strategy of a global institution operating across continents. In an exclusive interview with The Tribune—her first media interaction with an Indian newspaper after taking over the coveted role in January last—she speaks about her journey, leadership philosophy, HSBC's global and India strategy, the importance of digital transformation, and her advice to young professionals, especially women.

## RAILWAYS MINISTER ANNOUNCES SECOND MOUNTAIN TUNNEL IN PALGHAR FOR BULLET TRAIN PROJECT

**Diary Times Desk :** Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday announced a significant milestone in the Bullet Train Project with the breakthrough of the second mountain tunnel in Maharashtra's Palghar. This tunnel is 454 metres long with a width of 14.4 metres, and will accommodate both up and down tracks for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project, according to an official release issued by the Ministry of Railways. This is the second mountain tunnel breakthrough in Palghar district within a span of one month for the Bullet Train project, the first being MT-5 near Saphale on January 2. Minister Vaishnaw congratulated the entire high-speed rail team for their remarkable progress. He said the pace at which the team is working has instilled new confidence in the country. "The project is drawing global attention and appreciation due to several new innovations in construction and technology. He highlighted that many advanced construction technologies.

## INDIA-US TRADE DEAL DRIVES RALLY IN STOCK MARKETS: SENSEX, NIFTY QUOTE NEARLY 3 PC HIGHER

**Diary Times Desk :** Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty were trading nearly 3 per cent higher during afternoon session on Tuesday after India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent. After starting the trade on a buoyant note, the 30-share BSE Sensex later jumped 4,205.27 points or 5.14 per cent to hit the day's high of 85,871.73. The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 1,252.8 points or 4.99 per cent to 26,341.20. During the afternoon trade, the BSE benchmark traded 2,411.07 points or 2.95 per cent higher at 84,065.30. The Nifty quoted 742.30 points or 2.96 per cent up at 25,828.35. India and the US have agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from current 25 per cent, US President Donald Trump said on Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. All the 30-Sensex firms were trading higher. Adani Ports, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, Eternal and InterGlobe Aviation were trading sharply higher in the range of 8-4 per cent.



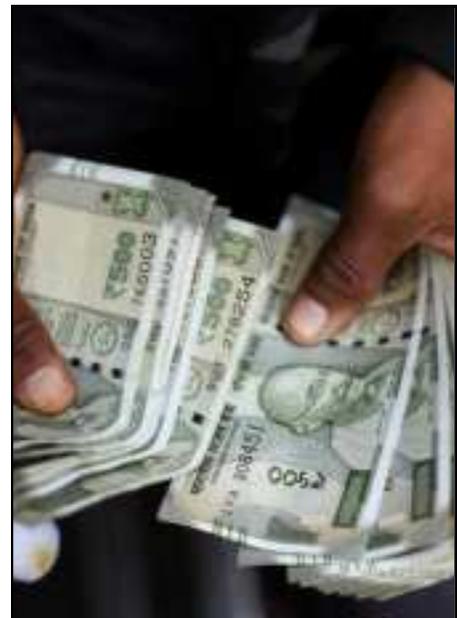
## ADANI, ITALIAN HELICOPTER MAKER LEONARDO INK MOU FOR MILITARY COPTERS IN INDIA

**Diary Times Desk :** Italy-headquartered aviation major Leonardo and the Adani Defence and Aerospace today announced a tie-up to make military helicopters in India. They will be positioning to bid for two separate helicopter requirements – one sought by the Navy and another sought for reconnaissance and surveillance by the Army and the Indian Air Force (IAF). The Ministry of Defence has floated two separate requirements that would result in procurement of 275 helicopters. One tranche is for 200 Light Reconnaissance and Surveillance Helicopters (RSH) – 120 are for the Army and 80 for the IAF. The second tranche is for 76 marine helicopters – 51 for the Navy and 25 for the Coast Guard. Post the MoU, the Adani Defence and Aerospace said it was pitching in the Leonardo's advanced AW169M and AW109 TrekkerM helicopters for the two bids. The AW169M is in the 5-tonne class of helicopters and that is class being sought for the needs of the Navy and the Coast Guard. The tender for 200 RSH seeks a 3 tonne copter. The Leonardo AW109 is of that class. "The collaboration will deliver phased indigenisation, robust maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) capabilities, and comprehensive pilot training," a company statement said.



## RUPEE JUMPS 119 PAISE TO 90.30 AGAINST DOLLAR AS US CUTS TARIFFS ON INDIAN GOODS

**Diary Times Desk :** The rupee appreciated 119 paise to 90.30 against the US dollar in early trade on Tuesday, after US tariffs on India were cut from 50 per cent to 18 per cent. Forex traders said the 18 per cent tariff changes the story, improving India's relative position and reopening the door for FII participation. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.30 against the US dollar, registering a gain of 119 paise over its previous close of 91.49. "The good news overnight was the US-India trade deal which was announced after a delay of almost 9 months by President Donald Trump and endorsed by PM Narendra Modi in which the trade tariffs were reduced to 18 per cent, a tad lower than what it is for Bangladesh and Pakistan our neighbours giving our exporters a relative advantage," said Anil Kumar Bhansali Head of Treasury and Executive Director Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP. Bhansali further noted that FIIs may finally buy Indian equities after being sellers for such a long time. "We need to wait and see the RBI stance today and in the coming days as it needs to buy the short dollar position," he added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.20 per cent lower at 97.43. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 0.41 per cent at USD 66.03 per barrel in futures trade.



## "WILL MAKE INDUSTRIES MORE GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE": STATE INDUSTRY BODIES ON INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

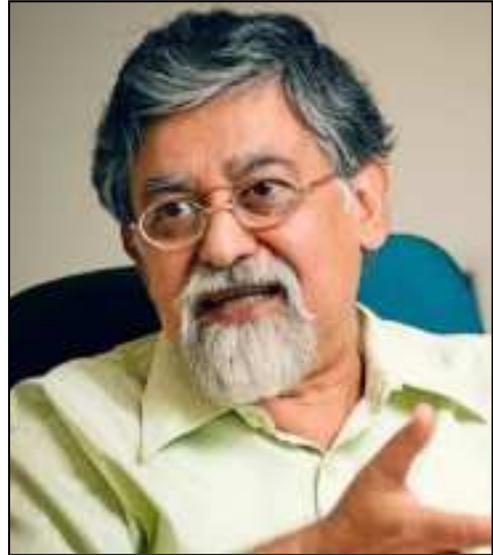
**Diary Times Desk :** State-level industry bodies across India have welcomed the India-US trade deal, calling it a significant boost for exports and saying it will make our industries far more globally competitive. Potluri Bhaskar Rao, President of the Andhra Pradesh Chamber of Commerce, described the agreement as "wonderful news for the Indian economy," highlighting the United States' status as one of India's top three trade partners, alongside China and the UAE. He noted that India already has trade agreements with the UAE and the European Union, and the latest pact with the US further strengthens the country's global trade position. "Nearly USD 130 billion in bilateral trade takes place between India and the USA. Due to 50% tariffs, India was at a disadvantage for the last 8-9 months, severely impacting several sectors," Rao said. He pointed out that Andhra Pradesh, a major exporter of aqua products, was particularly affected. "Shrimp exports worth nearly Rs 20,000 crore originate from Andhra Pradesh, with about 80% going to the US market. The high tariffs had a huge impact."

## ADANI ENTERPRISES REPORTS RS 11,985 CRORE EBITDA IN 9M FY26

**Diary Times Desk :** Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) announced a steady operating performance for the first nine months of FY26, reporting consolidated EBITDA of Rs 11,985 crore, even as revenues stood at Rs 69,756 crore for the period. In a statement, the company said the period was marked by major execution milestones, most notably the commencement of operations at the greenfield Navi Mumbai International Airport on December 25, 2025, less than five years after the acquisition. The airport has an initial capacity of 20 million passengers per annum and is seen as a key addition to India's aviation infrastructure. For the nine months ended December 31, 2025, AEL reported profit before tax (PBT) of Rs 3,581 crore, excluding an exceptional gain of Rs 9,215 crore from the sale of its Adani Wilmar stake and cement units to Ambuja Cements. Including exceptional items, PBT rose to Rs 12,796 crore, while profit after tax attributable.

## "ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT DOES NOT MEAN ISOLATION BUT COMPETITIVE INTEGRATION": NITI AAYOG'S ARVIND VIRMANI ON INDIA-US DEAL

**Diary Times Desk :** Arvind Virmani, Member, NITI Aayog, on Tuesday highlighted that the India-US trade deal is essential for "competitive integration," fostering exports and investment, rather than isolationism. Speaking with ANI, he said, "It takes two hands to clap; the other hand has now come forward. That is good news for exports, investment, and long-term growth." He emphasised that "Atmanirbhar Bharat" doesn't mean isolation, but competitive integration, with FTAs playing a key role in India's industrial strategy. While speaking with ANI, Virmani said, "Atmanirbhar Bharat does not mean isolation but competitive integration. Bilateral and free trade agreements are central to India's industrial strategy." The 2026 budget focused on semiconductors and rare earths as strategic goods to secure supply chains, positioning India as a key manufacturing hub in the "China plus one" strategy. "India has signed FTAs with Australia, the UK, and the EU, with more in the pipeline, and has initiated a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with the United States. We are not protectionist. These agreements eliminate tariffs on most goods and make India integral to global supply chains," he said.



## "WE WILL SHORTLY ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT ALONG WITH DETAILS, WHICH WE WILL BE INKING...": PIYUSH GOYAL ON INDIA-US TRADE DEAL



**Diary Times Desk :** Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said the India-US trade deal is an agreement that every Indian can be proud of and it is under the final stages of detailing between the negotiating teams of the two countries. Addressing a press conference here, he said that as soon as the final understanding of the deal is inked, joint statement is finalized and technical processes completed, details will be shared.

"Indians are celebrating a trade deal which is under the final stages of detailing between the negotiating teams of both countries. We will shortly be issuing a joint statement by both countries along with the details, which we will be shortly inking between the United States of America and India. As soon as the final understanding of the deal is inked and the joint statement is finalised, technical processes are completed, full details will be shared," he said. He expressed confidence that the deal will make every Indian proud, protect the interest of every Indian and provide huge opportunities for all the people of the country. Goyal said the trade deal will open up huge opportunities for India's labour-intensive sectors. "I can assure the people of India, that this is a deal that will make every Indian proud, that will protect the interest of every Indian and provide huge opportunities for all the people of India and will protect the sensitive sectors, the interests of our agriculture and our dairy sectors in full respect, opening up huge opportunities for our labor-intensive sectors, export sectors in textiles, plastics, apparel, home decor, leather and footwear, gems and jewelry, organic chemicals, rubber, goods, machinery, so many products, aircraft components. This is truly a deal that every Indian can be proud of," he said. He noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always safeguarded the interests of agriculture and dairy farmers and has never allowed any compromise in these sectors. "Even in the deal with the US, India's national interests have been fully protected," the minister said. Goyal described the agreement as a "future-defining deal" that will add immense value to India's growth prospects. He said the trade deal will open up vast opportunities for Indian businesses across sectors.

## PONG WETLAND RECORDS DIP IN MIGRATORY BIRD COUNT, SURGE IN SPECIES DIVERSITY

**Diary Times Desk :** The Pong Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary has recorded a decline in the number of migratory birds even though there has been a rise in the number of species, the annual census has indicated. As per the annual census of migratory and local birds that concluded late last evening, 1,24,344 migratory birds of 115 species were recorded at the sanctuary this year, compared to 1,53,719 birds of 97 species last time. A major decline was recorded in the arrival of bar-headed geese, as the number came down to 62,293 compared to 90,959 last year. The bird census was conducted by officials of the wildlife wing of the state Forest Department with the support of trained bird watchers and local volunteers. Prior to the census, a workshop was organised to sensitise the stakeholders. The sanctuary area was divided into sectors to ensure a comprehensive coverage. The workshop was presided over by the Chief Conservator Forest (CCF), Wildlife, Saurabh Bhail Patel and 25 teams consisting of 95 bird and wildlife experts were deployed for the census.

## UNAUTHORISED ACCESS TO VAHAN PORTAL UNCOVERED AT SOLAN RLA

**Diary Times Desk :** In a startling revelation, unauthorised access has been detected on the VAHAN portal of the Registering and Licensing Authority (RLA), Solan, leading to the illegal registration of three commercial vehicles. The development has raised serious concerns about internal collusion, procedural lapses and the possibility of a larger racket involved in giving stolen vehicles a new legal identity. According to a probe conducted by RLA officials, three commercial vehicles bearing registration numbers HPI4D-4512, HPI4D-4582 and HPI4D-4586 were registered on the official portal under suspicious circumstances. These vehicles were originally registered in Uttar Pradesh and were later re-registered at the Solan RLA allegedly without the mandatory physical verification by the Motor Vehicle Inspector (MVI), Solan, an essential step in the registration process. What further deepened suspicion was that these vehicles were subsequently transferred to RLA-Jhanduta in Bilaspur district, casting doubts.

## HIMACHAL WEATHER ALERT: FRESH WESTERN DISTURBANCE TO BRING SNOW, RAIN FROM FEBRUARY 6

**Diary Times Desk :** The higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh are set to witness another spell of snowfall along with rain on February 6. As per the state's meteorological department, weather across the state will remain dry till February 5, after which snowfall and rainfall are expected in Chamba, Lahaul, and Spiti districts on February 6 as a result of a fresh western disturbance. The higher reaches of the state will experience another spell of snowfall on February 8, while snowfall and rainfall are expected to occur across the state on February 9. Additionally, a yellow weather warning of dense fog and cold wave conditions has been issued for Mandi, Solan, Sirmour, Una, Bilaspur, and Hamirpur districts for February 4. Meanwhile, light snowfall continued in the higher reaches of Kinnaur, Lahaul, and Spiti, while light rain was also observed in isolated parts of the state during the last 24 hours. Kalpa in Kinnaur district received 10.5 cm of snow, Keylong 7.5 cm, Sangla 6.5 cm, Kukumseri 5.8 cm, while Hansa and Morang received 2.5 cm each. Similarly, Mandi received 22 mm of rain, and Sarahan received 10.5 mm of rain. Also, minimum temperatures were 2°C to 4°C above normal during the past 24 hours, ranging between minus 6°C and 12 °C. Similarly, maximum temperatures were 2°C to 6°C above normal, ranging between 1°C and 20 °C.



## MAN HELD IN SIRMAUR DISTRICT FOR HUNTING PROTECTED SPECIES

**Diary Times Desk :** Secret intelligence on illegal hunting led the Forest Department to arrest a resident of Kishankot village under Gram Panchayat Ajoli in Paonta Sahib of Sirmaur district after meat of a Schedule I protected wild animal and weapons used in the offence were recovered from his possession on Monday. The accused has been identified as Darshan Lal (43). The search operation was conducted under the leadership of Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF), Paonta Sahib. During the raid, officials recovered meat of the Northern Red Muntjac, locally known as kakkad, from the accused's premises. A double-barrel rifle, live cartridges, knives, a meat cleaver and other items allegedly used for committing the wildlife offence were also seized. Officials said the accused was found chopping the meat into pieces, allegedly with the intention of selling it. Forest officials stated that the weapon licence held by Darshan Lal had been issued strictly for crop protection. However, he allegedly misused the licensed firearm by carrying it into a forest area and hunting the protected animal, which constitutes a serious violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Confirming the action, ACF Paonta Sahib Aditya Sharma said, "The Northern Red Muntjac is a Schedule I species and enjoys the highest level of legal protection."

## HIMACHAL TARGETS 31% FOREST COVER BY 2030

**Diary Times Desk :** Himachal Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Monday chaired a comprehensive review meeting of the Forest Department and directed officials to prepare a well-defined and sustainable roadmap to increase Himachal Pradesh's forest cover to 31 per cent by the year 2030. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister said the state's current forest cover stands at 29.5 per cent and must be enhanced through a systematic and environmentally responsible approach. Emphasising the growing threat of climate change, he said global warming has emerged as a serious challenge worldwide, with its adverse impacts becoming increasingly evident. Keeping this in view, Sukhu said environmental conservation remains a top priority of the present state government. He noted that nearly 16,376 sq km of area in Himachal Pradesh comprises snow-bound, barren or mountainous terrain where plantation is not feasible. He, therefore, directed the Forest Department to identify potential plantation sites in each district and prepare a phased, area-specific plantation plan accordingly. The CM stressed the importance of prioritising native species, fruit-bearing plants and species with medicinal value to ensure ecological balance as well as livelihood support for local communities.



## YOUR HOROSCOPE

04-02-2026



### 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.

### WHAT DOES BIKRAM MAJITHIA'S RELEASE MEAN FOR PUNJAB POLITICS

**Diary Times Desk :** Dubbed the "bad boy of politics" by his rivals, Bikram Majithia has been alternately painted as a victim of political conspiracies and a symbol of entrenched corruption. His release from Nabha jail on February 3 in a disproportionate assets case following a Supreme Court order, and the political statements about it have put him back into limelight. With Punjab's 2027 Assembly election approaching, sources within SAD say Majithia could emerge as the linchpin in reviving the Shiromani Akali Dal and may play a crucial role in the party's alliance with the BJP. A key factor being talked about is his closeness to Radha Soami Satsang Beas chief Gurinder Dhillon, who visited him a day before his release. Dhillon in a rare comment to the media said the drug smuggling and disproportionate assets cases against Majithia were false. Dhillon's support is significant as Punjab has witnessed a slugfest over influence of various deras in elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently visited Dera Ballan in Doaba on Guru Ravi Dass Jayanti and touched the feet of the dera head. The dera is said to have played a pivotal role in elections.

### NANGAL-KIRATPUR SAHIB FOUR-LANE PROJECT TO TAKE OFF SOON: HARJOT BAINS

**Diary Times Desk :** Punjab Education Minister and Anandpur Sahib MLA Harjot Singh Bains on Tuesday announced the issuance of the final notification for the long-awaited four-lane section of the Nangal-Kiratpur Sahib road, paving the way for the project to commence shortly. Terming it as a "long-cherished public demand and a personal commitment, Bains said the project would significantly improve safety, connectivity, and economic activity in the region. Bains stated that the land acquisition process would be completed within the next two months, after which tendering and on-ground construction would begin at the earliest. In a video message, Bains recalled that the project's groundwork began with a detailed survey in July 2022.

He underscored the urgent need for the upgrade, particularly at the Nangal-Ganguwal stretch, which has remained accident-prone for years and has resulted in the loss of several lives.

### RAJA WARRING, 7 OTHER OPPOSITION MPS SUSPENDED FROM LOK SABHA FOR 'UNRULY BEHAVIOUR'

**Diary Times Desk :** In escalation of the tussle between the government and the opposition, seven Congress members and one CPI-M MP were suspended from the Lok Sabha on Tuesday for 'unruly behaviour' after they tore papers and threw them at the Chair. Their suspension from the House for the remaining part of the Budget Session that concludes on April 2 will intensify the face-off with the government over various issues, including Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi being denied an opportunity to cite an article based on excerpts from an unpublished 'memoir' of former Army chief MM Naravane on the India-China conflict of 2020. The opposition have also raised concerns about American President Donald Trump announcing the India-US trade deal and the alleged demolition drive at the Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi. As soon as the House met at 3 pm following multiple adjournments, Dilip Saikia, who was in the Chair, named the eight members. Subsequently, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju read out a resolution seeking suspension of the eight members for the remaining period of the Budget session.



### HARYANA CABINET CLEARS REVISION OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT FEES

**Diary Times Desk :** The Haryana Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday, approved a proposal of the Town and Country Planning Department to amend various statutory fees and charges under key urban development rules. The approved amendments relate to the Haryana Urban Area Development and Regulation Rules, 1976, and the Haryana Scheduled Roads and Controlled Areas Restriction of Unregulated Development Rules, 1965. The decision "paves the way to rationalise and update the existing fee structure in line with current economic conditions and urban development needs", the government said. The proposal includes revisions in scrutiny fees, licence fees, State Infrastructure Development Charges (SIDC) and Infrastructure Augmentation Charges (IAC) under the 1976 Rules. Scrutiny fees and conversion charges under the 1965 Rules have also been revised. A government spokesperson said most of these fees had not been revised for many years, making the exercise necessary to ensure adequate revenue for urban infrastructure and to keep pace with rising development costs. The revised rates, proposed on a rational basis, are expected to result in a 22-25 per cent increase in revenue for the state exchequer. The Cabinet also approved a new policy.

### HIGH COURT RAPS HARYANA OVER MINING VIOLATIONS IN ARAVALLIS

**Diary Times Desk :** Admonishing Haryana for "callousness", possible "connivance" of officers and a prima facie case of "loot and plunder of natural resources", the Punjab and Haryana High Court has directed the Chief Secretary to personally examine alleged large-scale environmental violations in a mining area in Charkhi Dadri and file an affidavit explaining how the state proposes to deal with "vast extent of environmental plundering". The Bench was told that the area falls in the Aravallis. Referring to a report prepared by an advocate appointed by the court as commissioner, the Bench of Justices Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Rohit Kapoor said he inspected the site on December 6, 2025, before submitting the report. A drone survey report was also placed before the Bench. "What is seen with the naked eye, is not only disturbing but is also bewildering. It prima-facie appears to be a case of blatant violation of environmental norms contained in the environmental clearance certificate as well as mining plan causing loot and plunder of natural resources". The court was unsparing on the administration's role in the matter. "The other unfortunate aspect noticed by us is the callousness.

### KARNAL POLICE WIDEN PROBE INTO 'GHOST PADDY PROCUREMENT'



**Diary Times Desk :** The Karnal police have widened the probe into the alleged "ghost paddy procurement" scam, intensifying scrutiny of farmers whose bank accounts received payments for paddy that allegedly never reached the grain markets. According to police sources, statements of 17 farmers linked to the Karnal grain market have so far been recorded. Gate passes were issued in their names and payments transferred to their accounts, despite the farmers claiming they did not sell the paddy reflected on the e-Kharid portal. Investigators said around 7,500 quintals of paddy were falsely shown as procured through these gate passes, causing a substantial loss to the state exchequer. The farmers reportedly disclosed that they later returned the money credited to their accounts to arhtiyas-cum-millers, pointing to serious irregularities in the procurement process. Arhtiya-cum-miller Devinder Singh, arrested last week, allegedly issued gate passes in the names of three farmers and received the payments routed through them. Police recovered Rs 2 lakh from his possession. The investigation revealed that he allegedly made up the stock shortfall by purchasing paddy from Uttar Pradesh at lower rates.

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

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

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

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

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



**Brad Lendon**

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's probably just the beginning.

### The evolution of drones

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

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

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



# Australia's About To Find Out

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

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



"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?"



**Hilary Whiteman**

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

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

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

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

From December 10, sites

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INFA

# A Blue Schoolbag In A Mass Grave

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

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



**Helen Regan**

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

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

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

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

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

But it is difficult to bury the past entirely.

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

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

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

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

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

### A blue school bag

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

**Diary Times Desk :** Drawn by the allure of high-octane thrills and classic designs, car enthusiasts from across the world gather each year in Paris for Rétromobile, Europe's leading indoor automotive show.

This year, for its 50th anniversary, Gooding Christie's has become the show's official partner, and on 29 January will hold its first auction of collector cars on the continent.

'Rétromobile is essentially Art Basel for the car world,' explains Rupert Banner, senior specialist and head of sale at Gooding Christie's in New York. 'It's a wonderful convergence of manufacturers, dealers, restorers, collectors and enthusiasts.'

Gooding Christie's was formed at the beginning of 2025, after Christie's acquired the leading car auction house Gooding & Company to bridge the worlds of art, luxury and collector cars. 'At the top end, the markets are becoming more intertwined, and fine cars are going from strength to strength,' says Banner.

The first Gooding Christie's sale took place in March 2025 at Amelia Island in Florida, and realised more than \$67 million. The top lot was a 1955 Ferrari 375 MM Berlinetta, which made \$9,465,000.

The following August, at Pebble Beach in California, a second auction realised over \$128 million. The top lot, a 1961 Ferrari 250 GT SWB California Spider Competizione made \$25.3 million, setting a new world record at auction for the California Spider model, and becoming the most valuable car ever to be auctioned by Gooding Christie's since inception. By the end of the year, the prices achieved by Gooding Christie's had broken more than a dozen world records.

What does Banner suggest are the most important things for newcomers to the category to consider? 'As with art, watches or wine, collectors prize rarity, provenance and condition. Then there are factors like mileage and exhibition history to take into account. We're also seeing a growth in nostalgic cars from the 1980s and 1990s — the sorts of machines people had posters of on their bedroom walls as teenagers.'

The upcoming sale includes 85 cars, spanning 120 years of automotive history, from iconic pieces of early-20th-century design to cutting-edge, track-only hypercars. Here, Banner outlines five of his favourites.

**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. During Boulton's lifetime, auctions were a favoured pastime of fashionable society, and rather than opening a showroom in the manner of Wedgwood, he chose instead to offer his goods at James Christie's Pall Mall saleroom, attracting elite London clientele. Boulton's fame reached overseas, with Catherine the Great becoming one of Boulton's most loyal patrons, ordering masses of his finest ormolu objects and stating that she firmly believed they were superior to those of the French.



## BARCELONA SPENT €4 MILLION ON KITS THAT WERE NEVER USED AND ARE NOW STORED IN A WAREHOUSE



**Diary Times Desk :** In recent years, Barcelona shirt designs have been widely ranked among some of the best in Europe and have generated unprecedented sales. The collaboration with Nike, especially after the contract renewal, is really paying off well for Barcelona, and there is already a lot of buzz around next season's kit designs. However, there was a time when Barcelona were ready to dump Nike and were flirting with other big brands, including Puma. While that never happened, the relic of those times still exists. According to a report from El Pais (h/t AS), it has emerged that Barcelona currently have approximately €4 million worth of merchandise sitting idle in an industrial warehouse. It appears the club commissioned the production of roughly 300,000 official garments that were never released to the public. These items, which include jerseys priced at €89 each.

## BARCELONA WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES TO HOST 2030 FIFA WORLD CUP FINAL AT CAMP NOU

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona are slowly positioning themselves to host one of the biggest events in world sport. According to a recent report from ESPN, the club and city authorities are working internally to ensure that the Spotify Camp Nou becomes the venue for the final of the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

The intention was made public during the Mundo Deportivo Grand Gala, where Jaume Collboni, the Barcelona mayor, officially confirmed the city's ambition. Barcelona has already submitted its candidacy to both the Royal Spanish Football Federation and FIFA, proposing Camp Nou as the stage for the tournament's showpiece match. Explaining the motivation behind the bid, Collboni highlighted Barcelona's long-standing relationship with major international events and its readiness to rise to the occasion once again. "Barcelona has always had a great ambition to host major sporting events. "A few days ago, I told Rafael Louzan, president of the Royal Spanish Football Federation, that the city would be very excited and ready to host the 2030 World Cup final." The mayor went on to specify the proposed venue and underlined that the final decision will rest with FIFA.

## BARCELONA ONE STEP AWAY FROM RENEWING 16-YEAR-OLD LA MASIA JEWEL

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona are moving closer to securing one of the most promising midfielders in their youth system, with 16-year-old Hugo Garces on the verge of renewing his commitment to the club. According to SPORT, talks between both parties are progressing smoothly, and confidence is growing that an agreement will be finalised soon.

Garces has been part of Barcelona's academy setup since the summer of 2021, when he arrived from Zaragoza to join the Under-12s.

Since then, his development has followed a steady upward curve, earning him recognition as one of the standout midfield profiles in La Masia. In his early years at the club, Garces was often compared to Thiago Alcantara due to his technical quality, close control, and ability to dictate play in tight spaces.

However, as his game has evolved, his style has taken on a more dynamic edge. Today, his profile is seen as closer to that of Gavi, particularly in terms of intensity, physical bravery, and his willingness to attack the box. Right-footed and similar in height to the Barcelona midfielder, Garces combines creativity with aggression.

## TER STEGEN'S INJURY FORCES BARCELONA TO RETHINK SUMMER PLANS WITH IMPACT ON SALARY CAP

**Diary Times Desk :** Barcelona could be forced into an unexpected rethink of their sporting and financial planning after fresh concerns emerged around the future of Marc-Andre ter Stegen. According to a report from SPORT, the German goalkeeper's recent injury has complicated what was already a delicate situation for all parties involved.

Ter Stegen, who is currently on loan at Girona, has suffered a serious setback that is expected to rule him out for between three and four months. That timeline alone has been enough to disrupt Barcelona's roadmap for the summer, as the club was not counting on the goalkeeper as part of their long-term plans. Barcelona's idea was for Ter Stegen to regain rhythm and visibility at Girona, perform consistently, and use that momentum to re-enter the market ahead of next season. The club believed this scenario would allow the goalkeeper to attract interest from top-level teams, while also putting himself in a strong position ahead of the upcoming World Cup with the German national team.



## LAPORTA'S OUTBURST OVER REAL MADRID PENALTY AGAINST RAYO: 'WHAT DOES THEIR CHANNEL SAY NOW?'

**Diary Times Desk :** Real Madrid were able to maintain their winning momentum in La Liga, thanks to a 2-1 victory over Rayo Vallecano this past weekend. The match has become the centre of attention in Spain lately, following a series of refereeing debacles, which Barcelona claim gifted Real Madrid the win.

Even the Barcelona president, Joan Laporta, did not hold back from pointing out these refereeing errors and openly criticising Real Madrid. In a recent interaction with the press, Laporta offered his thoughts on the Real Madrid - Rayo Vallecano game, pointing out the questionable moments. "Rayo came out very badly damaged from that match. It was a match in which two players were sent off, and the game was extended by ten additional minutes when the score was tied. "On top of that, a penalty was awarded in the last minute that, in my opinion, was incorrect," he said (h/t AS). Laporta, who is set to resign next Monday ahead of the Barcelona presidential election, added that Real Madrid having their hands on RMTV, which constantly puts pressure on referees by posting videos before each game, lends them a huge advantage in La Liga.

## BARCELONA LOSE TWO MULTI-MILLION 'LEVERS' AS FORMER DUO SET FOR FREE-TRANSFER EXITS

**Diary Times Desk :** FC Barcelona have been closely monitoring potential market moves involving players over whom they still hold economic rights. In recent summers, the club generated significant income from sell-on percentages, with deals involving players like Jean-Clair Todibo, Chadi Riad, and Nico Gonzalez, among several others, bringing sizeable revenue. However, according to SPORT, the close of the January window leaves Barcelona without two revenues that could have been important: neither Oscar Mingueza nor Mika Marmol moved clubs despite having offers. The former La Masia defenders' contracts with Celta Vigo and Las Palmas, respectively, expire at the end of the season, at which point they will leave as free agents. As a result, Barcelona will lose all rights over both players and, in the long term, would only be entitled to training compensation should any future transfer occur. Mingueza's situation has left the bitterest taste at the club. Barcelona retained 50% of a future sale, but Celta had already refused to sell him a year ago and again in the summer, turning down significant proposals.