

NEWS IN BRIEF

MEGHALAYA MP DIES WHILE PLAYING FUTSAL IN SHILLONG

Diary Times Desk : Meghalaya Lok Sabha MP and VPP leader Ricky Andrew J Syngkon died at a hospital on Thursday evening, shortly after collapsing while playing futsal in Shillong, party officials said. Doctors at the hospital here declared him dead around 8:45 pm, a senior Voice of the People Party (VPP) leader told PTI. Party colleagues and close associates said the parliamentarian was participating in a friendly futsal session when the incident occurred. Syngkon, who represented the Shillong parliamentary constituency in the Lok Sabha, was known for his active public engagements and grassroots outreach across the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma expressed shock over people.

VETERAN FILMMAKER MM BAIG FOUND DEAD AT HIS MUMBAI HOME

Diary Times Desk : Veteran filmmaker MM Baig, father of popular yesteryear child artiste Baby Guddu and who was involved with films such as 'Razia Sultan' and directed 'Chhoti Bahu', was found dead at his home, his publicist Hanif Zaveri said. He was in his 70s.

"He was unwell for quite some time. Since he didn't come out of the house for four to five days, the neighbours complained to the cops about a foul smell coming from the house.

"The police opened the door, found Baig sahab's body and informed his daughter. They took the body to Cooper Hospital for post-mortem at around 1:30 am. He was a loving man. I pray for his departed soul," Zaveri told PTI.

Baig began his career as an assistant to J Om Prakash, Vimal Kumar, and Rakesh Roshan on films like Govinda's 'Aadmi Khilona Hai', 'Jaisi Karni Waisi Bharni', and 'Karz Chukana Hai', Anil Kapoor-starrer 'Kala Bazaar' and 'Kishen Kanhaiya', among others. As an independent director, he directed two films - 'Naseeruddin Shah's 'Massom Gawah' (1990), which remained unreleased, and 'Chhoti Bahu' (1994), starring Shilpa Shirodkar.

AI SUMMIT NEWS

INDIA SEES DESTINY, NOT FEAR IN AI, SAYS PM MODI AT AI SUMMIT; INVITES WORLD TO DESIGN



Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India sees destiny, not fear, in the Artificial Intelligence revolution, while calling for global standards, transparency and water marking in the AI-generated content and ecosystem.

Addressing the India AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam, the Prime Minister invited world leaders to design in India and deliver to the world highlighting the tech talent pool of the country.

He also made a compelling case for transparency saying sunlight was the best disinfectant. "Just like sunlight is the best disinfectant, transparency is the best security. Some nations and companies believe AI is a strategic asset so it should be confidentially developed but our thought is different. We believe AI will be beneficial to the world when it is shared, when codes are opened and shared," Modi said in the presence of world leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazil PM Luiz da Silva and global tech leaders Sunder Pichai and Sam Altman.

The PM said only an open and shared AI can ensure a better and secure world. Advocating the need to develop AI as a global common good, he warned against deepfakes. "Deepfake and fabricated content are bringing instability in open societies. In the physical world we see nutrition labels on food to inform our decisions. Likewise, authenticity labels should accompany digital content so that people know what is AI generated and what is real," said PM Modi. He said as more texts, videos and images are coming, watermarking and clear source standards in the AI world are becoming imperative. "So it is necessary that this trust is inbuilt in technology. We also have to be more alive for children's safety. Just as school syllabus is curated, AI space should also be child safe and family guided," the PM said. He also divided the world into two segments and said there is one segment that is fearful of AI and another that sees destiny in AI.

'DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO': SAM ALTMAN ON AWKWARD MOMENT WITH ANTHROPIC'S DARIO AMODEI

Diary Times Desk : "I was sort of confused and didn't know what I was supposed to do," Sam Altman, the tech entrepreneur leading OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, said on Thursday, describing an awkward onstage moment with the CEO of rival AI firm Anthropic, Dario Amodei, at the India AI Impact Summit.

After the inaugural session of the summit, Altman and Amodei, who run two of the world's most closely watched AI companies, along with other tech moguls, went on stage for a group photograph with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Alphabet and Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Meta's Chief AI Officer Alexandr Wang, Sarvam co-founder Pratyush Kumar, and Google DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis were among other tech leaders on the stage for the photo-op. The Prime Minister was at the centre with Pichai on his right and Altman on his left. Amodei, who previously worked at OpenAI but eventually left to co-found Anthropic, was standing next to Altman. As cameras flashed, the Prime Minister and others held their hands up, while Altman and Amodei appeared briefly unsure whether to shake hands, clasp arms.



9 PATIENTS' EYES REMOVED, 9 OTHERS LOSE VISION AFTER CATARACT SURGERY IN UP'S GORAKHPUR



Diary Times Desk : Nine patients had to get an eye removed, and nine others lost vision in one of the eyes after they developed an infection following cataract surgeries at a private hospital here, prompting authorities to seal the facility and order an inquiry.

Official sources said on Thursday that the surgeries were conducted on 30 patients during an eye camp held at New Rajesh Hitech Hospital on February 1.

They said that within 24 hours of the surgeries, several patients began complaining of severe pain and discharge from the operated eye. At least 18 developed infections and were referred to hospitals in Delhi, Lucknow and Varanasi as their condition worsened, with one patient, however, partially regaining vision later, officials confirmed. District Magistrate Deepak Meena said the hospital has been sealed and a magisterial inquiry ordered. "If anyone is found guilty, their registration will be cancelled," he said. Chief Medical Officer Dr Rajesh Jha termed it a "serious lapse" and said action would follow the inquiry report.

EC ASKS 22 STATES, UTS TO PREPARE FOR FINAL PHASE OF SIR EXPECTED IN APRIL



Diary Times Desk : The Election Commission on Thursday asked 22 states and Union Territories including Delhi to complete preparatory work related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) at the earliest as the exercise is "expected to start from April". Once the exercise is completed, all states and UTs will be covered.

In a letter to the chief electoral officers of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Ladakh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Delhi, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Telangana and Uttarakhand, the poll authority said pan-India SIR of voters' list was ordered in June last year.

Battling "vote chori" allegations levelled by the opposition Congress, the Election Commission held the SIR of electoral rolls in 13 states and UTs and a 'special revision' in Assam this year. It is all set to hold a similar exercise in the remaining 22 states and UTs this year.

While the exercise, which kept the EC in the news, was completed in Bihar, it is ongoing in 12 states and UTs with nearly 60 crore electors. The remaining 40 crore electors will be covered in these 17 states and five UTs.

LADAKH PROTESTS

LADAKH PROTESTS: WANGCHUK NOT GIVEN VIDEOS THAT FORMED BASIS OF HIS DETENTION, WIFE TELLS SC



Diary Times Desk : Gitanjali J Angmo, wife of activist Sonam Wangchuk - detained under the National Security Act (NSA), 1980, since September 26, 2025, following violent protests in Leh - on Thursday, alleged in the Supreme Court that four videos that formed the basis of his detention were not shown to him.

On behalf of Angmo, senior counsel Kapil Sibal told a bench of Justice Arvind Kumar and Justice Prasanna B Varale that only the thumbnails on the pen drive were displayed. He asserted that not supplying the videos violated Wangchuk's right to effective representation before the advisory board as well as the government.

"It is now alleged by the state that the DIG came with a laptop and showed four videos. The laptop was provided to detainee on October 5, 2025, but those four videos were not there. Let's assume they showed it to be; that is not the requirement of law. The requirement is to give it to me. They have to provide the document; I don't have to ask. It is their constitutional duty to supply. We have said time and again that the four were never supplied," Sibal said. However, a lawyer assisting Sibal submitted that the pen drive was inserted in the laptop before Wangchuk.

BARAMATI LEARJET CRASH: SPECIAL AUDIT OF VSR VENTURES NEARS COMPLETION, SAYS MOCA



Diary Times Desk : Nearly three weeks after the fatal Learjet crash in Baramati that killed senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar and four others, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) said a special audit of VSR Ventures commenced on February 4 and is expected to conclude shortly, even as the technical probe into the accident gathers pace.

The ministry said it had directed the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to carry out a detailed review of the operator's regulatory compliance, operational control systems, maintenance practices, crew training standards, safety management systems, and monitoring of cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and flight data recorder (FDR).

"The audit findings, once finalised, will be examined under the DGCA's enforcement policy and procedures manual, and action will follow wherever violations are established," said the officials.



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GALGOTIAS UNIVERSITY APOLOGISES FOR 'CONFUSION' AT AI SUMMIT, SAYS REPRESENTATIVE 'ILL-INFORMED'

Diary Times Desk : Private university Galgotias on Wednesday apologised for "confusion" after a controversy arose over the display of a made-in-China robotic dog as its own innovation during the India AI Impact Summit and said one of its representatives manning the pavilion was "ill-informed". The controversy erupted after Neha Singh, a professor of communications at the University, on Tuesday showed to DD News a robotic dog Orion, saying it "has been developed by the Centre of Excellence at Galgotias University". As the video went viral, social media users highlighted that the robot was actually a Unitree Go2, manufactured by China's Unitree Robotics and commonly used in research and education worldwide. As the episode snowballed into a controversy, the university was asked to vacate the stall at the AI summit. We wish to apologise for the confusion created at the recent AI summit. One of our representatives manning the pavilion was ill-informed.

MAHARASHTRA GOVT CANCELS 5 PER CENT MUSLIM QUOTA IN JOBS, EDUCATION

Diary Times Desk : The Maharashtra government has cancelled the five per cent reservation to members of the Muslim community in jobs and education. A Government Resolution (GR) was issued to this effect on Tuesday, as the previous ordinance about the five per cent reservation has lapsed and there is an interim court stay on that decision. The previous Congress-NCP government had issued an ordinance to grant a 16 per cent quota to Marathas and five per cent to Muslims. As per the new GR, all previous decisions and the ordinance related to the five per cent reservation in government, semi-government jobs and educational institutions for the socially and educationally backward Muslim group included under the Special Backward Category (A) have been cancelled. The government has cancelled the earlier decisions and circulars from 2014 and stopped issuing caste and non-creamy layer certificates to Muslims in the Special Backward Category, the new order said.

ROHIT PAWAR FLAGS TDP LINK, SEEKS CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER'S EXIT AS BARAMATI CRASH PROBE ADVANCES

Diary Times Desk : NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar on Wednesday questioned the neutrality of the Baramati plane crash investigation, pointing to alleged links between the aircraft operator and leaders of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and said that the owner of VSR Aviation recently hosted his son's wedding in Jaipur, where a senior TDP leader was present while noting that the Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu belongs to the same party. In view of these connections, Pawar argued that the minister should not continue in office while the probe is underway, as it may raise doubts about the fairness of the investigation. His remarks came a day after investigators confirmed that crucial flight data has been retrieved from the Learjet 45 that crashed near Baramati on January 28, killing Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others. The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) had said Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR) has been successfully downloaded at Flight Recorder Laboratory of Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau. The cockpit voice recorder (CVR) is currently undergoing detailed technical analysis.

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INDIANS AMONG STUDENTS PURSUING COVID COMPENSATION CLAIM FROM 36 UK UNIVERSITIES

Diary Times Desk : Around 500 students based in India are believed to be among over 20,000 international applicants seeking compensation from 36 UK universities in a class action legal case for not receiving the level of education they paid for during the COVID pandemic. Student Group Claim, made up of around 1,70,000 potential student claimants as part of the collective lawsuit, said this week that a pre-action letter with information about the proposed claim has been issued to all 36 institutions. The group, represented by law firms Asserson and Marcus Parker, has claimed that students should be compensated for not receiving the level of education expected. While they paid for in-person teaching and access to university facilities like libraries and studios, their teaching was moved online and facilities were closed for lengthy periods during COVID. "UK undergraduates at university during the pandemic borrowed money at ridiculous interest rates to fund courses which were ruined by online teaching and closed facilities," said Shimon Goldwater, partner at Asserson. "Student Group Claim is helping students challenge universities to do what they should have done.

SURAT MAN HELD FOR EXTORTING RS 60 LAKH AND GOLD FROM HIS US-BASED WIFE

Diary Times Desk : Police in Surat have arrested a man for allegedly extorting Rs 60 lakh and gold ornaments from his US-based wife, originally from Gujarat, whom he married online, officials said on Wednesday. He also allegedly took possession of her residential flat in Hyderabad, police said. According to an FIR filed by the victim's brother, the woman was previously married in 2014 to another man, and they moved to the United States after he secured a job with an IT company. During their marriage, a flat in Hyderabad was purchased in the woman's name. Following marital disputes, the couple divorced in 2020 and began living separately in the United States. In 2023, the woman came into contact with Aijaz Patel, a Surat resident employed at a clothing store. Their acquaintance reportedly developed into a relationship after she ordered clothes from the store, police said. The two met in Hyderabad in January 2024, where she stayed for nearly 20 days. During this period, Patel allegedly gained her trust and took possession of the keys to her Hyderabad flat.

GRABBING BREASTS, PULLING PYJAMA STRING IS 'ATTEMPT TO RAPE': SC SETS ASIDE CONTROVERSIAL ALLAHABAD HC ORDER

Diary Times Desk : Terming it "patently erroneous", the Supreme Court has set aside the Allahabad High Court's controversial judgment that said allegations of grabbing a minor girl's breasts and pulling her pyjama string didn't amount to an attempt to rape. A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant restored the summons issued to the accused by the Special Judge under Section 376 IPC read with Section 18 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, holding that the alleged act was not 'preparation' but 'attempt' to commit rape. The Bench – which also included Justice Joyimalya Bagchi and Justice NV Anjaria – set aside the impugned order for "patently erroneous application of the settled principles of criminal jurisprudence". "The facts alleged being so, we cannot agree with the finding of the High Court that the allegations only amount to preparation, but not an attempt, towards the commission of the offence of rape. The attempt made by the accused persons appears clearly and inevitably leads us to conclude that, prima facie, a case for invoking the provisions of attempt to commit rape.

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INDIA, EU NOW NATURAL AND PREFERRED PARTNERS: JAISHANKAR

Diary Times Desk : External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said India and the European Union (EU) today regard each other as "natural and preferred partners", citing growing strategic convergence and recent agreements that together mark a new phase in bilateral ties. Speaking at the launch of the European Legal Gateway Office in India, Jaishankar described the initiative as a reflection of the "depth, confidence and maturity" of the India-EU strategic partnership and a practical step to facilitate talent mobility, education and professional engagement across Europe. He said relations had reached a defining moment with the participation of top EU leadership as Guests of Honour at India's Republic Day celebrations – the first such joint presence – signalling expanding political trust and long-term alignment. Jaishankar noted that the conclusion of negotiations for a free trade agreement, the signing of a security and defence partnership and adoption of the Towards 2030.

KOTA TWINS SHOCK WITH IDENTICAL JEE MAIN SCORE, LAND IN 99.998TH PERCENTILE

Diary Times Desk : Competitiveness ended at home for identical twins Mahroof Ahmed Khan and Masroor Ahmed Khan, as they both scored an identical 285 in their JEE Main, hitting the 99.998th percentile. The twins from Bhubneswar, students of Allen Career Institute here, appeared for the JEE Main 2026 in the same shift at the same centre. The exam result was declared on Monday. Born on May 7, 2008, the brothers studied together throughout, from school to coaching classes. According to their coaching institute, their mother, Dr Zeenat Begum, had been a gynaecologist working with the Odisha government since the 1990s, before she resigned to move to Kota with them in 2023. We shifted to Kota in 2023, initially for Olympiad preparation after both brothers qualified for the International Science Olympiad. They later decided to pursue JEE coaching," Begum said. She said the brothers have been high achievers all along, with Mahroof scoring 95.2 per cent and Masroor 97.2 per cent in Class 10.

LADAKH PROTESTS: WANGCHUK NOT GIVEN VIDEOS THAT FORMED BASIS OF HIS DETENTION, WIFE TELLS SC

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US TRADE TEAM IN INDIA, TO PARTICIPATE IN AI IMPACT SUMMIT

Diary Times Desk : A United States trade delegation led by Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade William Kimmitt is in India to take part in the upcoming AI Impact Summit, with preparatory engagements held in Bengaluru ahead of the New Delhi meetings. Officials from the International Trade Administration (ITA) began their visit with industry interactions on February 17, meeting American and Indian technology firms to understand how artificial intelligence is being deployed in business operations and to identify opportunities for deeper US-India technology collaboration. The delegation visited Chevron Engine, Google DeepMind, South Park Commons and Biocon, holding discussions on investment trends, innovation and cross-border partnerships in AI. Calling Bengaluru the "heart of tech innovation", Kimmitt said the visit came at a critical moment in bilateral relations and described the recent US-India trade agreement as historic.

UN CHIEF GUTERRES URGES INCLUSIVE AI GOVERNANCE, WARNS AGAINST 'WHIMS OF FEW BILLIONAIRES'



Diary Times Desk : Lauding India's role in shaping global conversations on emerging technologies, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Thursday said the future of artificial intelligence must not be dictated by a few powerful countries or corporations and called for inclusive governance led by the Global South.

Delivering opening remarks at AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Guterres congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for hosting what he described as the first major AI summit anchored in the Global South, saying holding the discussions in India "brings the conversation closer to the realities shaping much of the world".

"Meeting in India has special meaning. It brings this conversation closer to the realities shaping much of the world. Because the future of AI cannot be decided by a handful of countries – or left to the whims of a few billionaires," Guterres said.

He announced that the UN-mandated Independent International Scientific Panel on AI – comprising 40 experts – had been formally appointed to bridge knowledge gaps and ensure evidence-based policymaking. The UN is also launching a Global Dialogue on AI Governance, with its first session scheduled in Geneva in July, aimed at aligning regulations, safeguarding human rights and establishing safety standards.

MACRON CALLS FOR INCLUSIVE GLOBAL AI PUSH AT INDIA AI IMPACT SUMMIT 2026

Diary Times Desk : At the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in the national capital, Emmanuel Macron delivered a strong message on the need for inclusive and cooperative development of artificial intelligence, urging nations to resist digital fragmentation and instead work toward shared technological growth. Addressing an audience of policymakers, industry leaders, and technology experts, the French President underscored the urgency of shaping AI governance through collaboration rather than competition. He said, "At a time when tensions are rising, there is an increased sense of urgency to direct all our digital tools towards this inclusive approach and in order, indeed, to be strong here in India but to be strong as well on the African continent. And let's focus altogether towards bridging rather than dividing, creating rather than destroying, sharing rather than taking. France intends to use its G7 presidency to foster that vision. I know, Prime Minister Modi, that India will do the same through your BRICS presidency. No country is bound to serve only as a market where foreign companies sell the models and download the citizens' data. No country."



BOARD OF PEACE TO LOOK OVER UN, MAKE SURE IT RUNS PROPERLY: TRUMP



Diary Times Desk : The US will strengthen the United Nations, make it viable and help it "money-wise", President Donald Trump said on Thursday, as he asserted that his Board of Peace will be "looking over" the global organisation, making sure it runs properly. Trump made the remarks in his address to the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace, which was initiated as part of the US President's 20-point peace plan to end the conflict in Gaza. "And we are very closely working with the United Nations. In fact, I'm going to speak to the Secretary General in a little while. He's a good man, and I've had a good relationship," Trump said. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is currently in India for the India AI Impact Summit. Trump's 'Board of Peace' on Gaza is perceived as a rival to the UN. The US leader has previously said that the Board of Peace "might" replace the UN which, he said, has never lived up to its potential.

IMMIGRATION JUDGE REJECTS TRUMP EFFORT TO DEPORT PALESTINIAN STUDENT

Diary Times Desk : A US immigration judge has rejected efforts by President Donald Trump's administration to deport Columbia University student Mohsen Mahdawi, who was arrested last year following his participation in pro-Palestinian protests. Lawyers for Mahdawi detailed the immigration judge's decision in a court filing on Tuesday with a federal appeals court in New York, which had been reviewing a ruling that led to his release from immigration custody in April. It was the latest case in which an immigration judge rejected a case brought as part of the broader effort by Trump's administration to detain and deport non-citizen students with pro-Palestinian or anti-Israel views who engaged in campus activism. Chelmsford, Massachusetts-based Immigration Judge Nina Froes wrote in a February 13 decision that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security failed to meet its burden of proving he was removable, which it sought to do using an unauthenticated document.

DAYS AFTER ARUNDHATI ROY QUIT BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL, 80 ARTISTS SIGN LETTER CONDEMNING 'SILENCE' ON GAZA

Diary Times Desk : More than 80 artists, including Javier Bardem, Tilda Swinton, and prominent directors Miguel Gomes and Adam McKay have signed an open letter to the Berlinale (Berlin International Film Festival) condemning the festival's "silence" on Gaza and for "censoring" those who have spoken out. The open letter comes just days after Indian author Arundhati Roy criticised the comments of jury head Wim Wenders in the opening press conference. She said she was looking forward to it but now won't attend the premiere of the restored version of her film "In Which Annie Gives it to Those Ones" as she is disappointed by Wenders' comments about staying out of politics when asked about Gaza. The open letter, which was also shared by Mark Ruffalo on his social media page, has been signed by Angeliki Papoulia, Saleh Bakri, Tatiana Maslany, Peter Mullan and Tobias Menzies, as well as directors Mike Leigh, Lukas Dhont, Nan Goldin, and Avi Mograbi.

LAVROV HOSTS BRICS ENVOYS, DISCUSSES WAYS TO ENHANCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UNDER INDIA'S CHAIRMANSHIP

Diary Times Desk : Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday hosted ambassadors of BRICS member and partner countries and discussed ways to enhance "strategic partnership" within the grouping under India's rotating chairmanship this year.

India formally assumed on January 1, 2026, the chairmanship of BRICS, a 10-member bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, along with five new members.

A release by the Russian Foreign Ministry said, "The participants held a comprehensive exchange of views on enhancing the strategic partnership within the group, taking into account the priorities outlined under India's BRICS chairmanship this year."

In the group photo of the BRICS envoys posted by the ministry, Indian ambassador to Russia Vinay Kumar was seen standing in the centre next to Lavrov. "Over the working lunch the discussion focused on current global issues, highlighting the importance of preserving the UN's central role," the release said. BRICS-plus envoys stressed the need for joint efforts to reform the global governance system and enhance the influence of countries representing the Global Majority in international decision-making.

FORMER SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT YOON RECEIVES LIFE SENTENCE FOR IMPOSING MARTIAL LAW

Diary Times Desk : Former President Yoon Suk Yeol was sentenced to life in prison for his brief imposition of martial law in December 2024. Judge Jee Kui-young said he found Yoon guilty of rebellion for mobilizing military and police forces in an illegal attempt to seize the liberal-led National Assembly, arrest politicians and establish unchecked power for a "considerable" time. Yoon is likely to appeal the verdict. A special prosecutor had demanded the death penalty for Yoon, saying his actions posed a threat to the country's democracy and deserved the most serious punishment available, but most analysts expected a life sentence since the poorly-planned power grab did not result in casualties. South Korea has not executed a death row inmate since 1997, in what is widely seen as a de facto moratorium on capital punishment amid calls for its abolition. As Yoon arrived in court, hundreds of police officers watched closely as Yoon supporters rallied outside a judicial complex, their cries rising as the prison bus transporting him drove past. Yoon's critics gathered nearby, demanding the death penalty. The court also convicted and sentenced several former military and police officials involved in enforcing Yoon's martial law decree, including ex-Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun, who received a 30-year jail term for his central role in planning the measure and mobilizing the military. Yoon, a staunch conservative, has defended his martial law decree as necessary to stop liberals, whom he described as "anti-state" forces, from obstructing his agenda with their legislative majority.



'CONVEYS GOOD MESSAGE TO YOUTH': RANDHIR JAISWAL ON FRENCH PRESIDENT MACRON JOGGING IN MUMBAI

Diary Times Desk : External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that French President Emmanuel Macron jogging at Marine Drive in Mumbai conveyed a positive message on health to youth. "Mumbai hosts several marathons. And to have this sort of public exposure centered around health conveys a very good message to the youth of India and the youth across the world. I think that is the sentiment with which we should take this particular idea of President Macron jogging in Mumbai," the MEA spokesperson said in a media briefing. Earlier on Tuesday, French President Macron surprised the Mumbaikers by joining the rush of morning walkers in the city. The French President was seen jogging with a team of security personnel, including French and Indian officials. The jog proceeded peacefully, with minimal disruption from the media and locals along the route. Wearing a navy blue T-shirt and black sunglasses, Macron decided not to disrupt his fitness routine despite being in a foreign country, ahead of a long day of diplomatic meetings.

CHINA TIGHTENS GRIP ON TIBETAN MONK AFTER PRISON RELEASE, REPORT HIGHLIGHTS ONGOING RELIGIOUS CRACKDOWN

Diary Times Desk : A Tibetan monk from Kirti Monastery continues to face intrusive state monitoring even after being released early from prison, highlighting what rights groups describe as China's sustained repression of religious freedom in Tibet, as reported by Phayul. According to Phayul, Trinley Gyatso, a monk from Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) in northeastern Tibet, was freed in November 2025 before completing his five-year sentence. Chinese authorities reportedly justified the early release on the basis of "good conduct" during his incarceration. However, instead of resuming normal monastic life, the monk has effectively been placed under house surveillance, with his movements and interactions closely watched, which has made his life miserable. Gyatso was taken into custody on July 1, 2021, on accusations of circulating written materials.

"SUMMIT IS WORKING TOWARDS FAIRNESS IN AI ACCESSIBILITY," SAYS CANADIAN AI MINISTER SOLOMON

Diary Times Desk : Evan Solomon, Canada's Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, on Wednesday said the ongoing India AI Impact Summit is working towards ensuring fairness and wider accessibility in artificial intelligence, while emphasising the importance of rebuilding strong economic ties between India and Canada. Speaking to ANI on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Solomon said Canada is focused on strengthening partnerships with India across key sectors, particularly in AI and technology. "We're here at the AI Summit because we're building ties between Canada and India. We have lots of businesses that are working together, especially in AI and tech. And we're really looking forward to our businesses working more closely together on everything from energy, technology, life sciences and health."

INDIA, FRANCE LAUNCH INDO-FRENCH CENTRE FOR AI IN HEALTH AT AIIMS DELHI

Diary Times Desk : In a landmark move to strengthen bilateral cooperation in healthcare and emerging technologies, Union Minister for Health JP Nadda, along with French President Emmanuel Macron, inaugurated the Indo-French Centre for AI in Health (IF-CAIH) at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, on Wednesday. According to an official release, the IF-CAIH is a pioneering initiative designed to advance AI-driven research, medical education, and clinical innovation, addressing complex healthcare challenges while promoting interdisciplinary collaboration between India and France.

SON OF LATE ZIMBABWE PRESIDENT MUGABE DETAINED IN SOUTH AFRICA OVER SHOOTING, REPORTS SAY

Diary Times Desk : A son of former Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe was detained for questioning along with another man on Thursday over the shooting of a man at a house in Johannesburg, South Africa's national broadcaster reported. SABC named Bellarmine Chatunga Mugabe as one of the two detained and said the shooting occurred at his home. He is the youngest son of Zimbabwe's former leader, who died in 2019, and his second wife, Grace Mugabe. SABC said Bellarmine Chatunga Mugabe was seen in handcuffs in the driveway after police arrived. South African police said in a statement that an employee at the house in a plush Johannesburg suburb had been shot and was in a critical condition. Police did not name the two men taken in for questioning but said they were investigating a case of attempted murder. "The motive of the shooting is unknown at this stage and police investigations are underway," police spokesperson Col. Dimakatso Nevhuhulwi said. Robert Mugabe led Zimbabwe for 37 years before he was deposed in a coup in 2017. He died two years later in Singapore at the age of 95. Bellarmine Chatunga Mugabe's older brother, Robert Mugabe Jr., was fined \$300 last year after admitting to possession of marijuana in Zimbabwe.



Speaking at the inauguration, President Macron emphasised the importance of building sovereign AI capacity and talent, stating, "India and France are committed to developing the computing capacity and talent necessary to build our own trusted AI systems, as we cannot rely solely on technologies created and managed elsewhere. Artificial Intelligence must serve humanity - with strong protections for children, transparency in algorithms to address bias, and a firm commitment to preserving linguistic and cultural diversity." The launch coincided with the Rencontres Universitaires et Scientifiques de Haut Niveau (RUSH) 2026, a high-level academic and scientific forum held at AIIMS on February 18 and February 19, coordinated by the French Embassy.

IRAN, US LEAN INTO GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY AS NUCLEAR TALKS HANG IN BALANCE

Diary Times Desk : Iran and the United States leaned into gunboat diplomacy on Thursday as nuclear talks between the nations hung in the balance, with Tehran holding drills with Russia and the Americans bringing another aircraft carrier closer to the Mideast. The Iranian drill and the arrival of the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier near the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea underscore the tensions between the nations. Iran earlier this week also launched a drill that involved live-fire in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow opening of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of the world's traded oil passes. The movements of additional American warships and airplanes don't guarantee a US strike on Iran - but it does give President Donald Trump the ability to carry out one should he choose to do so. He's so far held off on striking Iran after setting red lines over the killing of peaceful protesters and Tehran holding mass executions, while reengaging Tehran in nuclear talks earlier disrupted by the Iran-Israel war in June.



IMF CHIEF KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA ARRIVES IN DELHI FOR INDIA AI IMPACT SUMMIT

Diary Times Desk : International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva arrived in Delhi on Wednesday for the India AI Impact Summit. Official spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal, said Georgieva was received at the airport by Minister of State for Corporate Affairs and Road, Transport & Highways, Harsh Malhotra. Jaiswal further stated that India values its close engagement with the IMF. In a post on X, Jaiswal said, "Warm welcome to the Managing Director of IMF Kristalina Georgieva. She was received by Minister of State for Corporate Affairs and Road, Transport & Highways, Harsh Malhotra at the airport. India values its close engagement with the IMF in advancing global financial resilience and supporting inclusive and sustainable development." World leaders flocked to New Delhi with the Global AI Impact Summit underway. Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Prime Minister of Croatia, Andrej Plenkovic on the sidelines of the India AI Summit.

AFGHANISTAN RELEASES 3 PAKISTANI SOLDIERS TO SAUDI OFFICIALS ON ONSET OF RAMADAN

Diary Times Desk : Afghanistan, with Saudi Arabia, confirmed Ramadan will begin today following crescent moon sightings, and released three Pakistani soldiers. Deputy Spokesperson of Afghanistan Hamdullah Fitrat announced that those soldiers were captured on October 12, 2025, during clashes with Pakistan. "In line with the policy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which emphasizes maintaining positive relations with all countries, and in respect for the arrival of the blessed month of Ramadan; a month of divine mercy and forgiveness; and in order to give a positive response to the request of the brotherly country of Saudi Arabia, as well as on the occasion of hosting the negotiating team that arrived in Kabul on Monday, three Pakistani soldiers who had been captured on October 12, 2025, during clashes with the Pakistani side, were released and handed over to the respected delegation.

YOUTH DISCONTENT COULD TRIGGER ANOTHER REBELLION, WARNS NEPAL PM KARKI



Diary Times Desk : Nepal's interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki on Thursday warned that failing to address youth discontent could trigger another rebellion. Speaking on the 76th Democracy Day celebrations at the Nepali Army Pavilion in Kathmandu, she said democracy must deliver results, protect citizens' rights and ensure accountability. Referring to the Gen Z-led protests in September last year that led to the ouster of K P Sharma Oli-led coalition government, Karki said, "That movement sought an end to corruption, nepotism and discrimination. It sought good governance and equitable justice." "The state must respond to this not only with generosity, but also with humility and a deep sense of duty," she added. She warned that failing to address youth discontent could trigger another rebellion. "No nation can progress by undermining the youth," Karki, who became interim Prime Minister on September 12 last year, said. "The youth have energy, aspiration for change and moral anger," she said, adding democracy is "not only a process, but a result-oriented system". "We embraced democracy in principle, yet in practice, we continued to foster discrimination. We wrote equality in the Constitution; yet within our structures, we went on protecting inequality," she said. Monopoly over power and resources has eroded public trust, fuelling rebellion, Karki added. Separately, Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel expressed his wish that Democracy Day may help achieve national goals of sustainable peace, good governance, development and prosperity in the country.

EU LAUNCHES FIRST-EVER 'LEGAL GATEWAY' OFFICE IN INDIA TO BOOST ICT TALENT MOBILITY

Diary Times Desk : In a significant move to bolster legal and strategic cooperation, the European Union inaugurated the first-ever European Legal Gateway Office in New Delhi on Wednesday. The launch took place in the presence of Henna Virkkunen, EU Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, and Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar. According to a statement released by the Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan, the event also saw participation from representatives of various EU Member States. The European Legal Gateway Office in India is the first of its kind in a partner country and will facilitate safe, legal, and well-informed migration and mobility from India to EU Member States in the ICT sector.

It will support Indian students, researchers, and professionals in the ICT sector by providing clear and reliable information on mobility pathways and their various skills and qualification requirements across all 27 EU Member States.

USISPF HOSTS US ENVOY SERGIO GOR TO DISCUSS AI, STRATEGIC TIES, TRADE, DIGITAL CORRIDORS WITH INDIAN INDUSTRY LEADERS

Diary Times Desk : The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) on Wednesday hosted US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, for a high-level closed-door luncheon at the India AI Impact Summit 2026. The discussion focused on US-India strategic and defence ties, recent trade successes, resilient supply chain partnerships, creating trusted digital corridors, and strengthening energy and trade collaboration. According to a release, the luncheon, chaired by Shantanu Narayen,

Vice Chair of USISPF and Chair and CEO of Adobe, saw participation from senior executives including Brad Smith, Vice-Chairman, Microsoft; Hemant Taneja, CEO of General Catalyst; Maeve Culloty, President & CEO, HPE Financial Services; Sachit Ahuja, Co-President, Tillman Global Holdings; Bipul Sinha, CEO of Rubrik; Umesh Sachdev, CEO of Uniphore; Raj Koneru, CEO; Saliil Parekh, CEO & MD of Infosys; Sumant Sinha, Chairman & CEO, ReNew; Balkrishna Goenka, Chairman of Welspun World; Manoj Menda, Chair of RMZ Supervisory Board; and Aparna Bawa, COO of Zoom.

"NO BETTER PLACE THAN INDIA TO DISCUSS AI TRANSFORMATION," SAYS RISHI SUNAK AT AI SUMMIT

Diary Times Desk : Former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Thursday called India the ideal venue for shaping the future of artificial intelligence (AI), and said there was "no better place" to deliberate on the global AI transformation, highlighting the country's digital public infrastructure, innovation ecosystem and public optimism around the technology. While addressing the AI Impact Summit as a keynote Speaker here, he said India was uniquely positioned to drive the next phase of AI's global journey, not just for developed nations, but for the developing world as well. "We do need a regular forum, where we can all meet and discuss this technology, and that is what this Summit provides under Prime Modi's leadership. This summit will deliver impact; it will show us how we can make AI work, not just for the developed world but for the developing world too," Sunak said. "There is no better place to discuss this AI transformation than India," Sunak said, adding that the summit would show how AI can improve health and education "in every corner of the globe" and enhance human dignity. Recalling that he launched the first AI Leaders' Summit in 2023 at Bletchley Park, Sunak said the idea was to create a global forum bringing together Presidents, Prime Ministers, CEOs, CTOs and developers to ensure that artificial intelligence evolves in favour of humanity.



PM MODI HOLDS TALKS WITH KAZAKHSTAN PM ON STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held talks with Kazakhstan Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit. PM Modi and Bektenov discussed ways to strengthen strategic partnership. In a post on X, Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral discussions with Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov of Kazakhstan on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit. The leaders discussed ways to strengthen strategic partnership and deepen bilateral cooperation in all sectors, including trade, defence and security, connectivity, energy, emerging technologies, and people-to-people ties." Bektenov arrived earlier in the day in Delhi and was received by Union Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh. In a post on X, Jaiswal said, "Prime Minister Mr. Olzhas Bektenov of Kazakhstan, arrives in New Delhi. Cordially received by Minister of State Kirti Vardhan Singh at the airport.

"WINDOW TO THE WEST": PHILIPPINES ICT CHIEF EYES INDIA PARTNERSHIP TO BRIDGE GLOBAL TECH GAP

Diary Times Desk : Henry Rhoel Aguda, Secretary of Information and Communications Technology of the Philippines, on Wednesday expressed a strong desire for closer technological and bilateral ties with India, highlighting the deep cultural and strategic synergy between the two nations. Speaking on the sidelines of the ongoing India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, Aguda emphasised the Philippines' unique geographic position and the immense potential for a mutually beneficial partnership in the technology sector. "The Philippines is strategically and geographically located as the window to the west. We feel that by partnering with India, we would be able to bring some of the technology back to the Philippines so that we can be a bridge between the two sides of the world," Aguda told ANI. The Secretary further underscored the significant Indian diaspora in the Philippines.

"INNOVATION SHOULD NOT BE RUSHED WITHOUT SAFEGUARDS": PM SCHOOF BACKS INDIA-NETHERLANDS PUSH FOR ETHICAL, TRUSTWORTHY AI

Diary Times Desk : Netherlands Prime Minister Dick Schoof on Thursday said that innovation in artificial intelligence must not be accelerated at the cost of safeguards, stressing the need for responsible development as part of the growing India-Netherlands partnership on ethical AI. Responding to a question from ANI during a press conference on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Schoof said both countries aim to harness the full potential of AI while ensuring it is developed and deployed responsibly. "We want to take full advantage of the artificial intelligence offers while at the same time ensuring that it is developed and used responsibly. Innovation should not be rushed without safeguards," he said. The Dutch Prime Minister cautioned against the unchecked deployment of AI systems, warning that inadequate safeguards around reliability, transparency and accountability could result in misinformation and the spread of fake news. "If AI systems are deployed without adequate reliability, transparency and accountability, they risk generating misinformation and unreliable outcomes, including the spread of fake news," Schoof stated.



TRADERS PROTEST AS ADMINISTRATIVE OVERREACH, ROAD CHAOS CRIPPLE RAWALPINDI

Diary Times Desk : Rawalpindi descended into traffic turmoil after simultaneous road construction projects, and a traders' demonstration on Murree Road brought the city to a grinding halt. The protest was organised by the Rawalpindi Central Traders Association in response to what shopkeepers described as relentless crackdowns by multiple provincial and district authorities, as reported by Dawn. According to Dawn, the traders accused the Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (Pera), Punjab Food Authority, District Price Control Committee, Punjab Revenue Authority and the district administration of imposing repeated fines, sealing commercial premises and registering cases against business owners. Over 200 shopkeepers assembled near Liaquat Bagh and blocked Murree Road for nearly 90 minutes, disrupting traffic flow on one of the city's busiest arteries. The protest was led by association president Shahid Ghafoor Paracha, accompanied by senior representatives. Demonstrators carried placards outlining their demands and chanted slogans against what they termed "harassment" by enforcement officials. Traders alleged that officials not only targeted shopkeepers but also created difficulties for customers visiting markets.

KENYA SEEKS DEEPER COLLABORATION WITH INDIA IN AI, CRITICAL MINERALS AT AI IMPACT SUMMIT 2026

Diary Times Desk : Kenya on Wednesday called for enhanced collaboration with India in artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductor manufacturing and critical mineral development, highlighting the growing momentum of South-South cooperation at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in the national capital. Speaking at the summit, Shikoh Gatua, Chief Administrative Officer of Qhala, Kenya, praised India's leadership and hosting of the event, stating that the engagement had translated ideas into tangible partnerships.

"It's been amazing. India has been an amazing host. Our startups and innovators have met incredible collaborators. We are seeing it move from paper to pavement when we talk about South-South collaboration. In the last three days, we have seen clear curiosity and acknowledgement that we need to work together," Gatua said.

TELECOM WILL POWER INDIA'S AI FUTURE: COAI AT INDIA AI IMPACT SUMMIT 2026

Diary Times Desk : The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has positioned telecommunications as the indispensable backbone of the nation's technological evolution, declaring that "Telecom will power India's AI future" during the India AI Impact Summit 2026. In a strategic collaboration with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), the COAI hosted high-level sessions focused on the synergy between next-generation networks and artificial intelligence. The summit underscored a pivotal shift: AI is no longer just a software play, but a physical infrastructure challenge that relies heavily on the robustness of India's digital highways. The summit featured two flagship sessions, "Generative AI and Future Networks" and "AI-Powered Bharat through Universal Digital Connectivity." These discussions brought together a powerhouse of policymakers and industry titans to map out how 5G-Advanced and emerging 6G frameworks will handle the massive data demands of GenAI. The sessions highlighted several crucial insights for India's AI journey.

SEBI FORMS WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW ESG RATING PROVIDERS' REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Diary Times Desk : The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has constituted a Working Group to review the regulatory framework for ESG Rating Providers (ERPs). The regulator said the decision has been taken based on feedback received from market participants and stakeholders regarding the existing regulatory framework. SEBI said in a press release on Wednesday that the Working Group comprises representatives from issuers, Investors/ESG rating users, Domestic ERPs, Global ERPs, ESG analysts, legal experts and academia. The terms of reference of the Working Group include undertaking a comprehensive review of the existing regulatory framework governing ERPs and examining representations and suggestions received from the market participants. The other terms of reference include recommending measures to enhance transparency.

MARKETS TURN VOLATILE AFTER FIRM START; SERVICES, CONSUMER DURABLES STOCKS DRAG

Diary Times Desk : Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty began the trade on a positive note on Thursday but soon turned in the negative territory, amid selling pressure in services and consumer durables stocks. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 245.11 points, or 0.29 per cent, to 83,979.36 in early deals. The NSE Nifty went up 65.95 points, or 0.25 per cent, to 25,885.30. However, both the benchmark indices soon pared early gains, with the Sensex quoting 131.07 points lower at 83,603.18, and the Nifty down 30.70 points at 25,788.65. Among the Sensex constituents, IndiGo, Asian Paints, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics Ltd, ITC, Trent, Larsen & Toubro, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, PowerGrid, Reliance Industries, and Bajaj Finance were the laggards. On the other hand, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki India, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India, Bharti Airtel and NTPC were trading in the green territory.



PIYUSH GOYAL MEETS WITH FINLAND PM, SWISS CONFEDERATION PM TO DISCUSS FURTHERANCE OF TRADE TIES

Diary Times Desk : Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Thursday met with the Prime Minister of Finland Petteri Orpo to discuss the opportunities presented by the India-EU Trade Deal. Taking it to social media platform X, Goyal said that he was "truly delighted to meet the Prime Minister of Finland, Mr. Petteri Orpo. Discussed how the India-EU Trade Deal presents significant opportunities for our countries to collaborate across key sectors, including services, technology and green energy, further strengthening India-Finland trade & investment ties." In a separate development, Goyal also held a high-level meeting with President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin during his official visit to India to attend the India AI Impact Summit 2026. "The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment of India and Switzerland to further deepen their longstanding economic partnership and strategic cooperation under the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA). In the context of the AI Impact Summit, both sides acknowledged the need to balance innovation with responsibility and noted that TEPA offers significant opportunities for technology collaboration in areas such as precision engineering, health sciences, renewable energy, innovation.



ROSHNI NADAR MALHOTRA CALLS AI A "STRUCTURAL SHIFT", EMPHASISES IP-LED VALUE CREATION

Diary Times Desk : Chairperson of HCL Technologies Roshni Nadar Malhotra on Thursday described Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a structural shift rather than a routine technology cycle, emphasising the need for India to lay thrust on Intellectual Property-led value creation. Speaking at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Malhotra said AI represents a defining moment in technological history, comparable to the advent of the printing press and the Internet.

"Artificial intelligence is no longer something we switch on and switch off. It is with us at all times. AI is becoming an assistant, a guide, a teacher, sometimes even a companion," she said.

Highlighting the speed and scale of AI adoption, Malhotra emphasised that "when knowledge becomes programmable, industries are redefined rather than merely evolving."

"While previous decades were defined by the dial-up modem, mobile ringtones, and smartphone screens, the present era is shaped by the invisible hum of neural networks," she said.



ADANI GROUP ANNOUNCES SCHOLARSHIPS FOR YOUNG TALENT AT INDIA'S TOP BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Diary Times Desk : The Adani Group has announced 24 fully-funded scholarships for students at India's leading business schools under the 2025-27 cohort of the Adani Accelerated Leadership Programme (AALP). The scholars, drawn from the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) in Bangalore, Calcutta and Lucknow, and the Indian School of Business (ISB), were formally felicitated at the Group's headquarters in Ahmedabad by Karan Adani, Managing Director, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ), and Director, Adani Cement. The announcement of scholarships reinforces Adani Group's commitment to inclusive leadership development and nation-building, a release said. The AALP Scholarship is designed to ensure that high-potential management students are not constrained by financial circumstances. Selection is based on a rigorous evaluation framework that combines academic excellence with demonstrated financial need, enabling merit to prevail irrespective of background, the release said.

PANKAJ ADVANI CROWNED LIBER WIN CHAMPIONS CUP 2026 WINNER; SIGNS AS LIBER WIN'S INDIAN BRAND AMBASSADOR

Diary Times Desk : India's most decorated cueist, Pankaj Advani, etched yet another glorious chapter in his storied career by clinching the inaugural Liber Win Champions Cup 2026, defeating Kamal Chawla 6-3 in a commanding best-of-11 final at the Karnataka State Billiards Association (KSBA), Bengaluru. In a fitting finale to a high-quality three-day invitational event featuring 16 of India's finest professional cueists, Advani showcased composure, tactical mastery, and clinical break-building to lift the prestigious trophy and become the first-ever Liber Win Champions Cup champion. A Champion's Composure in the Final - The title clash saw Advani in sublime touch as he controlled proceedings against a determined Kamal Chawla. While the scoreline suggests a comfortable victory, the frames were fiercely contested.

TAIWAN TO REMAIN DOMINANT IN CHIP PRODUCTION FOR YEARS, BUT AI ROLLOUT MAY RESHAPE GLOBAL CAPACITY: OFCOM CEO

Diary Times Desk : Taiwan will continue to be the dominant hub for global chip production for many years, but the rapid rollout of artificial intelligence will drive major industrial shifts and require new manufacturing capacity worldwide, Ofcom CEO Melanie Dawes said today.

"It was just interesting to hear that about Taiwan remaining the dominant place for chip production for many years to come," Dawes told ANI exclusively on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, adding that "but we're going to see a huge amount of change as AI rolls out. We're going to see new industries develop, and new capacity will need to be built everywhere."

Taiwan is the leading force in global semiconductor manufacturing, accounting for more than 60% of worldwide chip production and over 90% of the most advanced, cutting-edge semiconductors as of 2026. India has also stepped up efforts to manufacture indigenous semiconductor chips under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM). During the same event, which was based on the theme of Diffusing AI: Human Capital, Infrastructure and Trust. Nikesh Arora, CEO, Palo Alto Networks, said, "No country can build chips with the pace and efficiency the way Taiwan is building. They have built multi billion dollar industry on it."



CRISTIANO RONALDO INVESTS \$7.5 MILLION IN HERBALIFE'S PRO2COL™ TECHNOLOGY, ACQUIRES 10% EQUITY STAKE



Diary Times Desk : Herbalife Ltd., a premier health and wellness company, community and platform, today announced global sports icon Cristiano Ronaldo acquired a 10% equity interest in HBL Pro2col Software, LLC, an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of Herbalife that holds the Pro2col technology. Pro2col is Herbalife's next-generation, digital, personalized health and wellness operating system, designed to drive daily engagement, sustainable behavior change, and measurable outcomes through a structured, data-driven approach to wellness. Ronaldo invested \$7.5 million, along with a commitment to provide services and sponsorship rights to Pro2col Software. The investment underscores Ronaldo's deep personal commitment to health and nutrition. It also reflects his confidence in the future of personalized nutrition and Herbalife's ambition to make data-driven, personalized wellness accessible to communities globally—combining innovative technology with the power of personal support through its distributor community. Herbalife has been Ronaldo's global nutrition partner since 2013, inspiring better nutrition and performance globally. Herbalife and Ronaldo collaborated on the launch of Herbalife24® CR7 Drive, a sports drink formulated to meet the nutrition and performance needs of the global soccer legend and benefit athletes of all levels across the globe. "Cristiano has been a valued partner for more than a decade, and his decision to take an ownership stake in Pro2col marks an important milestone in our relationship," said Herbalife Chief Executive Officer Stephan Gratziani. "His investment reflects a shared belief in the power of nutrition, data, AI, and personalized insights to drive better health outcomes, and reinforces his confidence in the future impact of Pro2col."

RS 37 CRORE SPENT ON 19 REST HOUSES IN MANDI FROM JAL JEEVAN MISSION FUNDS DURING BJP REGIME: AGNIHOTRI

Diary Times Desk : Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri today said a sum of Rs 37.58 crore had been spent on the construction of 19 rest houses in Dharampur and Seraj Assembly segments of Mandi district from the Jal Jeevan Mission (JMM) during the previous BJP regime despite there being no mandate for it. Replying to a query by Dharampur MLA Chandershekar, Agnihotri, who holds the charge of Irrigation and Public Health Department, informed that a sum of Rs 1,227 crore, out of the total amount of Rs 6,395 crore, approved for Himachal under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JMM) by the Centre was still pending. He said Rs 600-crore works had already been completed in Himachal from the state's funds under the JMM for which the money from the Centre is still awaited. "Twelve rest houses, worth Rs 26.11 crore were made in Dharampur Assembly constituency and seven in Seraj segment for Rs 11.47 crore in Mandi district from the JMM despite there being no provision for it in the project," he informed. He said the Centre had said that this amount spent on rest houses would have to be borne by the state government.

OPPOSITION TO BE TAKEN INTO CONFIDENCE ON PENDING MLA LAD FUNDS: CM SUKHU

Diary Times Desk : Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Wednesday said his government is contemplating as to how much percentage of the MLA Land Area Development (LAD) Fund can be given to the legislators considering the financial situation of the state. Sukhu was replying to a query by Jogindernagar MLA Prakash Rana during Question Hour in the Vidhan Sabha today. "You have provided money to 543 Mahila Mandals from the MLA Area Development Fund despite the limit of 10 per cent on this. You should have given this money for completion of development works," the Chief Minister said. He added that two installments of the MLA LAD Fund had been released to all MLAs before July 5, 2025. An agitated Rana said that if MLAs do not have any powers or grant money to help people, there is no point in being elected representatives.

NEWLY MERGED AREA OF UNA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION SANS WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

Diary Times Desk : The Una Municipal Committee (MC) was upgraded to the Municipal Corporation around a year ago with the incorporation of 14 adjoining panchayats into the city limits. However, the state of sanitation in the newly merged areas has turned from bad to worse since the panchayat bodies have been disbanded in these areas, while the MC authorities neither have funds and resources, nor have devised any plans for the proper management of tonnes of waste being generated at the household level every day. New dumping grounds have begun to come up, posing health hazards besides turning the area into an eyesore. Dumping grounds have also come up along the highway heading from Chandigarh to Dharamsala passing through Una city. According to information obtained from the Una MC, the old city area, which was under the Municipal Committee, has 11 wards, each having around eight sanitation workers for maintaining cleanliness, collect garbage from households and transporting it to the designated dumping site in Rampur village, now a part of the Una Municipal Corporation.



COMMODORE MATHW VISITS HPU, DISCUSSES STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC-DEFENCE COLLABORATION

Diary Times Desk : Commodore Varghese Mathew from the Union Ministry of Defence visited Himachal Pradesh University (HPU) here and interacted with Vice-Chancellor Mahavir Singh regarding strengthening academic and defence collaboration, promoting interdisciplinary research and exploring potential partnerships in the areas of strategic and technological significance. The Vice-Chancellor assured Commodore Mathew of full institutional support for the proposed collaborations and expressed the university's readiness to work closely with the Union Ministry of Defence. He apprised Commodore Mathew about the Himalayan Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, which was established recently and is actively engaged in advanced research and capacity building in disaster risk reduction and resilience. Besides, Commodore Mathew also engaged in a series of academic interactions with the university faculty members, research scholars and the university leadership. He first interacted with the university members at the Department of Environmental Science and delivered an address on the theme "Development of Weather Modification Technology and Capabilities."

DALAI LAMA'S BROTHER NGARI RINPOCHE TENZIN CHOEGYAL PASSES AWAY AT 80

Diary Times Desk : Ngari Rinpoche Tenzin Choegyal, the youngest brother of the Dalai Lama has passed away at the age of 80 at his residence, Kashmir Cottage, in Dharamsala on Tuesday night. His demise marks the end of a life dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan religion, culture and the political aspirations of the Tibetan people in exile. Born in Lhasa in 1946, the Fire Dog year of the 16th Rabjung cycle, Ngari Rinpoche was raised in a family that has become central to Tibet's modern history. After China's occupation of Tibet in 1959, he accompanied the Dalai Lama into exile in India, joining thousands of Tibetans who has come here. Recognised at the age of three as the reincarnation of Ngari Rinpoche, a revered lineage associated with western Tibet (Ngari), he assumed spiritual responsibilities early in life. His upbringing combined traditional Tibetan Buddhist education with modern academic training. After arriving in India, he studied at St Joseph's School in Darjeeling before pursuing higher studies in the United States. Over the years, Ngari Rinpoche held several important positions within the exile Tibetan administration, formally known as the Central Tibetan Administration.

YOUR HOROSCOPE

20-02-2026

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Aquarius Today you may have to face huge arguments in your family over small matters. Employees will be suspended due to discipline 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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

AAP SARPANCH SHOT DEAD AT WEDDING IN PUNJAB'S TARN TARAN, SECOND SUCH INCIDENT IN 2 MONTHS

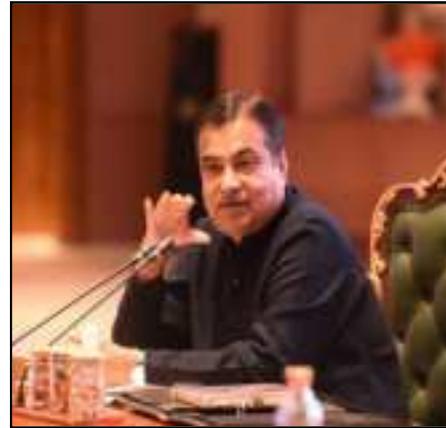
Diary Times Desk : Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) sarpanch Harbarinder Singh, 40, of Thathiyian Mahanta village, was shot dead, and his relative Jermandeep Singh was injured when two assailants opened fire during a wedding ceremony at Sheron village around 3.15 pm today. The villages are nearly six km apart. This incident has sent shockwaves among the public and AAP grassroots politicians, as it's the second such incident in two months. Earlier, on January 5, AAP sarpanch Jarmal Singh of Vaitoha Sandhua village in Tarn Taran was shot dead during a wedding ceremony in Amritsar. Harbarinder Singh leaves behind two sons under 10 years old. He was a commission agent and had agricultural land. The deceased was attending the wedding of his relative Gursewak Singh when three assailants arrived on a motorcycle. Eyewitnesses said the assailants had pistols and shot the sarpanch. Jermandeep Singh, standing nearby, tried to retaliate but was injured by an AK47-wielding assailant. The attackers escaped unchecked. Kulwant Singh, an eyewitness, said the assailants wore designer suits and didn't try to hide or escape quietly. The incident caused panic, and people ran to escape the firing.

PUNJAB AND HARYANA HIGH COURT GRANTS BAIL TO FARMER-ACTIVISTS JEOND AND CHAUKE AMIDST PROTESTS

Diary Times Desk : The Punjab and Haryana High Court today granted bail to two farmer-activists Shagandeeep Singh Jeond and Baldev Singh Chauke. The order by Justice Rajesh Bhardwaj is significant as the Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) had announced an indefinite protest outside Bathinda district administrative complex, seeking their release. In one of the petitions filed through counsel Harchand Singh Bath contended that totally false story had been projected by the prosecution. As per the prosecution story, the complainant in the case — DSP (R) Bathinda — had alleged that police and revenue officials had gone to conduct the demarcation of Jeond village in compliance with the order passed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in a writ.

UNION MINISTER GADKARI APPROVES RS 1,464-CRORE CHANDIGARH TRICITY RING ROAD LINK

Diary Times Desk : In a significant push to the long-awaited Tricity Ring Road project, the Union Government on Thursday approved the construction of a 10.3-km, six-lane greenfield spur, connecting the under-construction Ambala-Chandigarh expressway on NH-205A with the proposed Zirakpur bypass — filling a critical missing link that had stalled progress on the Rs 12,000-crore mobility network for over two years. The approval delay for over two years pushed costs up by more than half. Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, announcing the approval, said: "In Punjab, we have approved Rs 1,463.95 crore for the construction of a six-lane, access-controlled greenfield spur linking the Ambala-Chandigarh section of NH-205A with the Zirakpur bypass. As part of the Tricity Ring Road project, the corridor will decongest key urban junctions across Mohali, Chandigarh and Panchkula by diverting through-traffic. The spur — connecting near Rajo Majra village on the Ambala.



HSGMC CHIEF JHINDA FACES BACKLASH: 17 MEMBERS WITHDRAW SUPPORT, DEMAND RESIGNATION

Diary Times Desk : The Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (HSGMC) is facing an internal power struggle due to a fractured mandate. President Jagdish Singh Jhinda has failed to gather the requisite two-third majority to convene a general house meeting for the second consecutive time, prompting Opposition members to demand his resignation on "moral grounds". Former ad-hoc HSGMC presidents Baljit Singh Daduwal and Didar Singh Nalvi, along with other governing council and executive members, met in Panchkula to strategise Jhinda's ouster. Daduwal stated, "Jhinda's failure to hold the house meeting due to lack of quorum shows that the majority of members have turned against his 'dictatorial' style, and he has lost the moral right to lead." Jhinda blamed a "handful" of members for intentionally derailing the proceedings. The general house meeting to finalise the annual budget of Rs 104 crore for 2025-2026 was also stalled, affecting development, religious, and social programmes. Jhinda stated that a group of members wants to indulge in corruption, which won't be tolerated. He claims to have a group close to matching the requisite quorum and will schedule a meeting soon.

GURUGRAM SCHOOL FACES PROBE AFTER 11 STUDENTS UNABLE TO APPEAR FOR CLASS 10 BOARD EXAMS

Diary Times Desk : Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Ajay Kumar has ordered an inquiry after 11 Class 10 students of a private school were unable to appear for their first board examination conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The students alleged that they were "duped" by Educrest International School, which, authorities found, held valid CBSE affiliation only up to Class 8. The issue came to light on the day of the examination when parents approached the police, claiming that the school had misled them into enrolling their children in higher classes despite lacking affiliation for Classes 9 and 10. The District Elementary Education Office (DEEO), after examining the school's credentials, confirmed that Educrest International School did not have CBSE authorisation to run Classes 9 and 10. The Deputy Commissioner has sought an explanation from the school principal and asked why strict action should not be initiated. "The academic future of students admitted to a school rests with the institution. Parents allege they were misled about the school's affiliation status and came to know the facts only on the day of the examination. We have sought an explanation.

FASTER CONNECTIVITY TO SHIMLA AS GADKARI CLEARS RS 1,464 CRORE FOR 6-LANE ROAD LINKS IN PUNJAB



Diary Times Desk : The Centre has approved Rs 1,463.95 crore for the construction of a six-lane, access-controlled greenfield spur in Punjab, aimed at significantly improving connectivity and reducing traffic congestion across the Chandigarh Tricity region.

The new corridor will link the Ambala-Chandigarh section of National Highway 205A with the Zirakpur Bypass, forming a key component of the proposed Tricity Ring Road project.

The Union Minister said the project was designed to decongest major urban junctions in Mohali, Chandigarh and Panchkula by diverting heavy through-traffic away from city roads. At present, key stretches of NH-44, NH-205A and NH-152 face frequent bottlenecks due to rising vehicular load and inter-state movement. The new spur is expected to ease pressure on these highways and streamline traffic flow.

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.



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.

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



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

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

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

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

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.

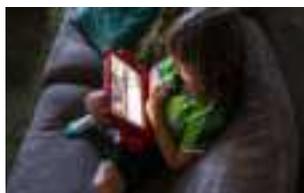
The US began widespread use of drones during Operation Desert Storm, the response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The Tomahawk land-attack missile – a cruise missile but also an unmanned aerial vehicle as it can change course and target in-flight – saw its first combat in 1991.



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?"

"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.



10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WASSILY KANDINSKY

Diary Times Desk : Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow in 1866 to a multicultural, bourgeois family: his father was a tea merchant from Siberia, his mother descended from Mongolian aristocracy. He trained as a lawyer, and was associate professor of law at Moscow University before ever picking up a paintbrush. Everything changed when, in 1896, he came upon a painting from Monet's 'Haystack' series in an exhibition — and was awestruck. As Kandinsky would later put it, the way the worldly forms dissolved into a blaze of colour 'surpassed my wildest dreams'.

That year, at the age of 30, Kandinsky abandoned his career and moved to Munich to study art. Among the early styles he embraced were Impressionism and Jugendstil (the German equivalent of Art Nouveau). Travels across the rest of Europe followed, before he settled with his lover, Gabriele Münter, in the picturesque Bavarian town of Murnau in the foothills of the Alps.

Works from this time — such as Murnau — Strasse (1908) and Murnau — Ansicht mit Burg, Kirche und Eisenbahn (1909) — mark a stunning advance. Bathed in high-key colour, they show the influence of Henri Matisse and the Fauves. Even more striking is the way Kandinsky simplified the forms of the town and surrounding landscape, reducing them to basic shapes. This was a crucial period in his transition towards abstraction.

Kandinsky wasn't religious in the traditional sense, but he was deeply spiritual. Among the thinkers who most influenced him was Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society in 1875, who contended that there is a higher, immaterial realm beyond the visible world.

In the painting Strandszene ('beach scene'), Kandinsky provided what appears to be a glimpse of that realm: a rich patch of red at the top of the canvas, beneath which human figures toil in the material world. In 1911, he wrote *On the Spiritual in Art*, a text in which he outlined the transcendental potential of art, suggesting that it should no longer depend upon discernible reality. His thinking in that treatise brought him one step closer to abstraction.

Alongside Münter, Franz Marc and a few others, Kandinsky briefly formed part of a group called Der Blaue Reiter ('The Blue Rider'). This loose association of experimental painters first showed their work together in Munich, before exhibiting in Herwarth Walden's Der Sturm gallery in Berlin. Walden was so taken by Kandinsky's work that, in 1912, he offered the artist his first solo show. It left the majority of critics bemused. Oskar Bie, of the Berliner Börsen-Courier newspaper, wrote that he couldn't make 'head nor tail' of the semi-abstract objects and figures.



THE COLLECTION OF ROGER AND JOSETTE VANTHOURNOUT: 'A REFLECTION OF TWO PEOPLE'S PASSION TO LIVE WITH THE OBJECTS THAT SPOKE TO THEM'

Diary Times Desk :

Roger Vanthournout was renowned for the notes he made and the photographs he took when he and his wife Josette visited art galleries, dealers or auction houses together. He would also ask questions, and sometimes even take measurements — all in the name of research and preparation for adding a particular work to their collection.

The Belgian couple's considerations extended beyond just liking an item, to appraising where best it might be shown in the carefully curated display of pieces at their home.

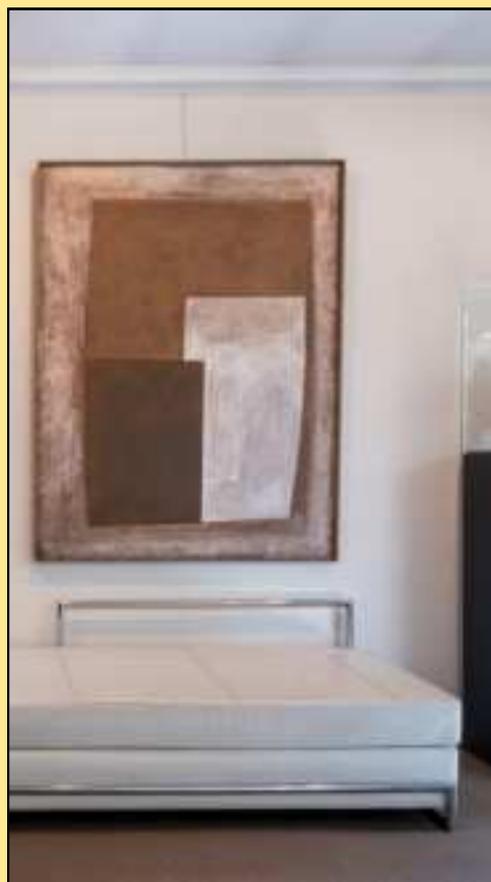
Lovingly and diligently put together over six decades, the Vanthournouts' collection offers a rich overview of the course of modern and contemporary art. It covers a range of movements, styles and media — painting and sculpture most notably, but also works on paper and photography, spanning more than 100 years of artistic creation.

Highlights include works by the likes of René Magritte, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst and Henry Moore, as well as Yayoi Kusama, Bruce Nauman, Thomas Schütte and Tracey Emin.

The collection is being offered by Christie's across a trio of dedicated auctions, collectively titled Modern Visionaries — The Roger and Josette Vanthournout Collection: an Evening Sale on 5 March 2026, a Day Sale on 6 March — both in London — and an Online Sale running from 25 February to 12 March.

'Each acquisition Roger and Josette made was a reflection of their shared vision and values,' says Olivier Camu, Christie's deputy chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art. 'Their collection was built on curiosity and a passion for art, and shaped by a sense of discovery and thoughtful decision-making.'

Roger Vanthournout studied interior design as a young man, before embarking on a successful career running a furniture business in the city of Izegem in Flanders. Josette was a painter, and the couple began collecting art together from the early days of their marriage, in the mid-1950s. Their initial interests included Chinese ceramics and Flemish Expressionism, though the collection as we know it today started to take shape when the Vanthournouts turned to Surrealism — in many cases buying work by their compatriots, such as Paul Delvaux and Magritte.



BARCELONA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DOESN'T RULE OUT SIGNING BUNDESLIGA SUPERSTAR: 'WE'RE WORKING ON IT'

Diary Times Desk : With the election season in full swing, the FC Barcelona presidential candidates have not been shy in offering their promises to fans.

While Joan Laporta has vouched for continuity and the defence of the Barça badge, Marc Ciria wants to make widespread reforms with Lionel Messi at the heart of the project. Meanwhile, candidate Xavier Vilajoana has promised some big-name signings, while retaining focus on youth development at La Masia. As Barcelona gear up for a busy summer, one of the club's priorities is to sign a long-term replacement for Robert Lewandowski. To that end, Vilajoana believes Barcelona can sign Harry Kane to replace Lewandowski if he wins the election. In a social media post, the Barcelona presidential candidate even confirmed his management is working on a deal to bring Kane to Catalonia. "Only when we don't have the talent at home should Barça be able to go to the market

BARCELONA FORWARD CONTINUES TO POST SOLID NUMBERS IN LA LIGA DESPITE OBVIOUS DIP FROM LAST SEASON

Diary Times Desk : It is clear that Robert Lewandowski is no longer the attacking menace he once was at the peak of his powers.

Even from his last season's numbers, the Pole has had a significant decline and has netted 13 goals in all competitions. However, this has to be taken with the caveat that Lewandowski has not been the first-team regular for Barcelona this season, while injuries have slowed his prospects as well. Lewandowski is undeniably playing fewer minutes this season, frequently sharing starting duties with Ferran Torres.

The Polish veteran has made 15 appearances, while his Valencian teammate has featured 20 times. Despite this reduced role, Lewandowski has still managed to score a total of 13 goals in 1562 minutes, effectively averaging a goal every 121 minutes. While this is lower than previous seasons, his current numbers remain highly respectable. At this exact stage last season, Lewandowski had accumulated 31 goals in 2,790 minutes across 38 matches.

FORMER REAL MADRID STAR BACKS BARCELONA FOR SUCCESS DESPITE RECENT LOSSES – 'THIS ISN'T A CRISIS'

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona's season went from bad to worse after the club fell to a 2-1 defeat at the hands of local rivals Girona.

The defeat came just days after Barcelona succumbed to a 4-0 loss to Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the Copa Del Rey semifinals.

In light of the recent results, former Real Madrid player Santi Canizares offered his take on Barcelona's season as well as its coach, Hansi Flick. In a recent interview on Radio MARCA, Canizares claimed that he believes Barcelona are still favourites to win the Champions League and refused to call this a crisis.

"This isn't a crisis; Barça create a lot of chances. I'd be worried if they weren't creating chances, not if they weren't converting them. The team has the talent to win the UEFA Champions League," he said.

However, the former goalkeeper did point out that Barcelona's defence looks weak compared to other top teams, adding that Joan Garcia shouldn't be under so much pressure.

BARCELONA OUTRAGED OVER DOUBLE STANDARDS FROM REFEREE AFTER 2-1 LOSS TO GIRONA

Diary Times Desk : FC Barcelona fell to a shock 2-1 defeat to Girona on Monday night away at Estadi Montilivi, which meant they are now trailing Real Madrid by two points in the title race.

While the performance was not at its best, the headlines were dominated by the controversial refereeing once again, as Girona's winner should have been chalked off for a foul on Jules Kounde in the buildup, but was overlooked by the referee and the VAR. As such, Mundo Deportivo reports that there is serious anger and indignation within Barcelona over the clear stamp by Claudio Echeverri on Kounde before Girona's decisive goal, especially when compared with similar incidents in the past. The Blaugrana are outraged over the double standards shown by referees. Last season, when Barcelona took on Rayo Vallecano, a goal by Robert Lewandowski was disallowed in the 74th minute for a slight prior stamp by Kounde on Pep Chavarria, with the VAR intervening. But, on Monday, the contact was much stronger from Echeverri on the Frenchman, there was absolute silence from the VAR after the referee waved play on. The on-field referee was Cesar Soto Grado on both occasions.

BARCELONA OUTRAGED OVER DOUBLE STANDARDS FROM REFEREE AFTER 2-1 LOSS TO GIRONA

Diary Times Desk : The Barcelona election season is finally here, with Joan Laporta and Victor Font emerging as the two main candidates.

In an election that is going to play a key role in determining Barcelona's future, one of the key issues is the situation of referees in La Liga.

Barcelona believe that they have been at a disadvantage due to the lack of competency from the Spanish referees and have already filed an official complaint to the RFEF. As reported by AS, Victor Font scheduled a counter-event on Tuesday to announce the primary initiatives he will undertake if elected on March 15. One of his first decisions will be to file a lawsuit against the Technical Committee of Referees (CTA) over an alleged conflict of interest, and against Real Madrid Television for attempted competition manipulation. "After the match against Girona, we must make it clear that Barcelona fans are deeply disappointed and more vulnerable than ever," Font stated. "For the last five years, Real Madrid has managed to distort the competition. During this time, Real Madrid has been awarded 26 more penalties than Barça," he added.

FLICK HOLDS IMPORTANT MEETING WITH BARCELONA STAFF AND SQUAD AFTER BACK-TO-BACK LOSSES

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona are not having a good time right now. After suffering a 4-0 defeat at the hands of Atletico Madrid in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals, they lost 2-1 to local rivals Girona.

The defeat at Montilivi meant Barcelona had to relinquish their position at the top of the league table, with Real Madrid now becoming the new league leaders.

Coach Hansi Flick is clearly not happy with how things are going now and has taken some necessary steps to try and mitigate the problem. According to SPORT, Flick held a lengthy meeting with his staff and the squad earlier in the day.

After two days off from training, Flick focused on fine-tuning details and engaging in extended discussions with the dressing room following two consecutive defeats. This roughly 60-hour disconnection was an unusual decision designed to let the squad breathe and return with recharged batteries before it was too late.

