DIARY TIMES

Wednesday 22 April 2026 | Shimla | Vol: 05 | Issue: 784 | Pages: 14 | Price: 4

www.diarytimes.com ·twitter.com / thediarytimes ·facebook.com/thediarytimes

NEWS IN BRIEF

230 villagers fall ill after wedding feast in Gujarat's Dahod district

Diary Times Desk : More than 200 villagers suffered from suspected food poisoning after consuming a wedding feast in Gujarat's Dahod district, an official said on Tuesday.

At least 59 villagers were hospitalised following the incident on Monday night, and their condition is said to be stable, the official said.

"As many as 230 people complained of vomiting, diarrhoea, and abdominal pain shortly after having dinner at a wedding in Abhlod village in Dahod district," Dahod collector Yogesh Nirgude said. Around 400 wedding guests had consumed a meal that included mango juice around 8 pm.

Independent MP Pappu Yadav draws flak for disparaging remarks against women in politics

Diary Times Desk : Independent MP Pappu Yadav on Tuesday triggered a sharp political backlash with a controversial remark on women in politics, shifting focus away from the already heated debate on the Women's Reservation Amendment Bill.

Addressing a press conference in Purnia, Bihar, Yadav made a sweeping and objectionable claim, suggesting that a vast majority of women cannot survive in politics without access to private spaces controlled by male politicians. The remark, seen as deeply problematic, drew immediate criticism for its tone and implications.

He went on to argue that while Indian society symbolically places women on a pedestal, calling them goddesses, it fails to ensure them dignity or equal footing in public life. In his view, both the political system and society are responsible for creating conditions that restrict women's independent rise.

The statement has since sparked outrage, with political voices cutting across lines questioning both the language and the mindset behind it. Even as some pointed to structural barriers faced by women.

PM MODI NEWS

'BLATANT ABUSE OF POWER': PRIVILEGE NOTICE AGAINST PM MODI OVER APRIL 18 ADDRESS

Diary Times Desk : A privilege motion has been moved against the Prime Minister over his April 18 televised address to the nation, with senior Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP KC Venugopal alleging that remarks made during the speech amounted to imputing motives to Members of Parliament and undermining parliamentary privilege.

In a detailed notice submitted to the Lok Sabha Speaker on Tuesday, Venugopal, who is also the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee, contended that the Prime Minister's address, delivered after the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, failed to secure the required majority in the House, departed from established conventions governing such national broadcasts.

Referring to the speech, Venugopal said that the Prime Minister had "made direct reflections on the voting pattern of Members of the Opposition and attributed motives to them", an act he described as a "serious breach of privilege and contempt of the House". He underlined that casting aspersions on MPs for their conduct inside Parliament violates long-standing protections guaranteed under parliamentary procedure.

The notice emphasised that an address to the nation by a sitting Prime Minister is meant for moments of national importance and collective concern, not for political criticism. "Addressing the Nation by the Prime Minister of a Government not able to muster requisite majority in Parliament, for criticising the Opposition parties is unprecedented," the letter read, adding that such conduct constituted "unethical and blatant abuse of power".

BJP chief Nabin demands Congress apology for Kharge's 'terrorist' remark on PM Modi

Diary Times Desk : BJP president Nitin Nabin on Tuesday slammed Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge for using the word terrorist for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The use of words like 'terrorist' for the prime minister by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is the height of Congress's declining politics. This is not merely a comment on one individual, but also an insult to the mandate of those 1.4 billion countrymen who have expressed their trust through the democratic process."

Nabin said whenever the Congress finds itself cornered on questions of development and facts, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and their disciples resort to such rhetoric to divert attention from the issues. When the country's women power is demanding an account of their rights from the Congress, the emergence of such low-level statements reflects its desperation. "The Congress and Rahul Gandhi should apologise to the country for such a statement. Whenever Rahul and his coterie have crossed the bounds of propriety in words, the public has given them a befitting response. This time too, the people will surely respond," Nabin said.
The Congress has in the past too grappled with unsavoury poll-eve references for PM Modi.

MAMATA TO PM

'If he wants fish, I'll cook it': Mamata to PM as jhalmuri, fish fuel TMC-BJP sparring

Diary Times Desk : Jhalmuri and fish — integral to Bengal's food culture — have become part of the political crossfire between the TMC and the BJP as the election campaign heats up.

With the TMC alleging the BJP would ban eating fish, meat and eggs if it comes to power in the state, the TMC supremo upped the ante on Tuesday, saying that if the prime minister "wants to eat fish, I will cook it for him myself".

According to reports, the prime minister is a vegetarian. This came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a pit stop during his poll hustings in Jhargram on Sunday to grab 'jhalmuri' — a popular Bengali street food made of puffed rice, green chillies, and an assortment of spices — from a nondescript roadside shop, adding a zing to the fiercely fought polls, with CM Mamata Banerjee terming it a "drama".
"It was only a show. The 'jhalmuri' he had was not made by the shopkeeper," she said, while suggesting that the snack might have been prepared by the SPG (Special Protection Group) — the force responsible for providing proximity security to the PM.

Will Constitution not come to rescue of believer who is not allowed to touch deity: Supreme Court

Diary Times Desk : The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the chief priest of the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple if the Constitution will not come to the rescue of a believer who is not allowed to touch the deity. The remark by the top court came after the chief priest said that when a devotee goes to a temple for worship, it can't be in antagonism to the characteristics of a deity.

The nine-judge Constitution Bench is hearing petitions related to discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala Temple in Kerala, and on the ambit and scope of the religious freedom practised by multiple faiths.

The Bench comprises Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices B V Nagarathna, M M Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan, and Joymalya Bagchi.
Appearing for the 'thantri', senior advocate V Giri submitted that the nature of ceremonies and rituals followed in any temple forms the integral part of the religion and therefore is a religious practice.

EOW arrests Reliance Power CFO, 2 others in fake bank guarantee case

Diary Times Desk : The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) on Tuesday said that it has arrested the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Reliance Power Limited and two others for allegedly preparing and using forged bank guarantees to secure tenders.
The arrested individuals were identified as Ashok Kumar Pal (50), CFO of Reliance Power Ltd; Partha Sarthi Biswal (54), managing director of Biswal Tradelink Pvt Ltd; and Amarnath Dutta, an official added. The case was registered based on a complaint filed by Biblesh Meena, manager at Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. It was alleged that Reliance NU BESS Ltd, a subsidiary of Reliance Power Limited, submitted two forged bank guarantees of Rs 68.20 crore each during a tender process, Deputy Commissioner of Police (EOW) Subodh Kumar Goswami stated in a press statement. These guarantees were purportedly issued by foreign banks, namely ACE Investment Bank (Malaysia) and FirstRand Bank Ltd (Manila, Philippines). Their authenticity was falsely supported through fake emails and fabricated Structured Financial Messaging System (SFMS) confirmations, purportedly from SBI, which were later denied by the bank, the statement added.

PM Modi condoles loss of lives in Kerala fire incident, announces ex-gratia

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on Tuesday condoled the loss of lives in a major fire at a fireworks storage facility in Kerala's Thrissur district.
According to the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), at least 13 people lost their lives in the blaze, while several others sustained injuries after the fire broke out at the storage facility in the Mundathikode area. Officials said five of the injured are in critical condition, two are undergoing treatment in hospital wards, and at least 17 others have suffered minor injuries. "Saddened to hear about the loss of lives due to the mishap at a cracker factory in Thrissur, Keralam. My deepest condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover at the earliest," Modi wrote in a post on X. He also announced financial assistance from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF), with Rs 2 lakh to be provided to the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for those injured.

CLASSIFIED
To place an advertisement
CALL +91 8627064966
Monday - Saturday (9am - 6pm)

BJP CHIEF NABIN DEMANDS CONGRESS APOLOGY FOR KHARGE'S 'TERRORIST' REMARK ON PM MODI

Diary Times Desk : BJP president Nitin Nabin on Tuesday slammed Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge for using the word terrorist for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The use of words like 'terrorist' for the prime minister by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is the height of Congress's declining politics. This is not merely a comment on one individual, but also an insult to the mandate of those 1.4 billion countrymen who have expressed their trust through the democratic process." Nabin said whenever the Congress finds itself cornered on questions of development and facts, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and their disciples resort to such rhetoric to divert attention from the issues. When the country's women power is demanding an account of their rights from the Congress, the emergence of such low-level statements reflects its desperation. "The Congress and Rahul Gandhi should apologise to the country for such a statement. Whenever Rahul and his coterie have crossed the bounds.

COPS DRAG GOA MLA OUT OF GOVT OFFICE AFTER OVERNIGHT STIR; MINISTER CALLS PROTESTERS 'BLACKMAILERS'

Diary Times Desk : Police allegedly dragged RGP MLA Viresh Borkar out of the Town and Country Planning office here along with several others on Saturday morning after they protested there overnight against the conversion of a tribal area into a 'settlement zone', where construction activity is allowed. The Revolutionary Goans Party (RGP) legislator accused the police of manhandling him and submitted an application of breach of privilege against the concerned officials. After the police action, the legislator and other protesters continued their protest against the government from a different site, while Town and Country Planning (TCP) Minister Vishwajit Rane refused to revoke the government order, calling the protesters as "blackmailers". The protesters claimed that 84,000 square metres of the land in Palem-Siridao village in St Andre Assembly constituency in North Goa was converted into a settlement zone.

86 NATIONS, TWO GLOBAL BODIES SIGN AI IMPACT SUMMIT DECLARATION: ASHWINI VAISHNAW

Diary Times Desk : Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday said 86 countries and two international organisations signed India's AI Impact Summit declaration, even as he hit out at the Congress for "hurting the country's image" on a global stage. "At the AI summit, various technical solutions were presented, and some of the startups performed very well...There is a huge enthusiasm even on the fifth day of the summit, especially among the youth," he told the media at the summit venue. "A total of 86 countries and two international organisations have signed the declaration of the AI Impact Summit. The world has appreciated the human-centric AI vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They also appreciated the country's effort in democratising artificial intelligence (AI) resources, where the thrust is on both economic growth and social good," he said. The Minister also condemned the Congress for "hurting the country's image" on a global stage. "When I interacted with many exhibitors, they said that the way the youth Congress workers created a ruckus at the summit was shameful. This shows that they (Congress) are stooping so low in politics. The Congress party is anti-youth and does not want any innovations," he added.

'BLATANT ABUSE OF POWER': PRIVILEGE NOTICE AGAINST PM MODI OVER APRIL 18 ADDRESS

Diary Times Desk : A privilege motion has been moved against the Prime Minister over his April 18 televised address to the nation, with senior Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP KC Venugopal alleging that remarks made during the speech amounted to imputing motives to Members of Parliament and undermining parliamentary privilege. In a detailed notice submitted to the Lok Sabha Speaker on Tuesday, Venugopal, who is also the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee, contended that the Prime Minister's address, delivered after the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, failed to secure the required majority in the House, departed from established conventions governing such national broadcasts. Referring to the speech, Venugopal said that the Prime Minister had "made direct reflections on the voting pattern of Members of the Opposition and attributed motives to them", an act he described as a "serious breach of privilege and contempt of the House". He underlined that casting aspersions on MPs for their conduct inside Parliament violates long-standing protections guaranteed under parliamentary procedure.

RAHUL APPEARS BEFORE COURT IN RSS DEFAMATION CASE; SAPKAL REPLACES SHIVRAJ PATIL AS HIS SURETY

Diary Times Desk : Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday appeared before a court at Bhiwandi in the district in a defamation case filed by an RSS activist, and presented his party's Maharashtra unit chief Harshwardhan Sapkal as his new 'surety' or guarantor for bail. As he travelled to Bhiwandi by road after landing in Mumbai, BJP workers showed him black flags at Mulund toll plaza and shouted slogans, accusing the Congress of maligning India's image through the Youth Congress's protest at the AI summit in Delhi. Gandhi, accompanied by Sapkal, party MP Varsha Gaikwad and his lawyers Narayan Iyer and Kushal Mor, reached the magistrate's court around 10:30 am. The court had asked the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha to appear in person and provide a new surety following the death of previous guarantor, former Union Minister Shivraj Patil Chakurkar, in December last year. Chakurkar had stood surety when the court granted bail to the Congress leader in 2016 upon his appearance. Sapkal on Saturday filed an application before the magistrate requesting permission to stand as surety for the accused. After the verification of his affidavits and other documents, the court granted the plea.

RIGHT TO CLEAN ENVIRONMENT: SC ISSUES PAN-INDIA DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE WITH SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES

Diary Times Desk : As massive dump sites active in metropolitan areas adversely impacted the right to a clean and healthy environment of citizens, the Supreme Court has issued pan-India directions for implementation of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026, which will come into effect from April 1. Taking note of uneven compliance with the SWM Rules, a Bench led by Justice Pankaj Mithal said that the present generation cannot afford to wait for further legislative refinement while existing implementation gaps persist. "The neglect of municipal solid waste will affect health as much as the economy," said the Bench – which also included Justice SVN Bhatti. "It is now or never. Expecting high results without fundamental spadework of source segregation and infrastructure would be unreasonable. Every stakeholder is duty-bound to ensure the realisation of a waste-free India," it said. "A challenge of this magnitude requires a synchronized effort between the appointed officers of the local bodies and elected representatives, including the respective mayors.

ALL LANGUAGES MUST BE PROTECTED FROM ANY ATTACK: MAMATA ON INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Diary Times Desk : Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is central to identity, learning, emotional wellbeing and meaningful participation in society. On the International Mother Language Day, many popular names underlined the importance of preserving and protecting one's languages from any form of attack. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee asserted that all languages are equally worthy of respect. Paying tributes to those killed during language movements, she said her government honours linguistic diversity and has accorded official recognition to several languages. She said Bengali is not only a language of great literary heritage but part of a broader commitment to respecting all linguistic communities. "We have also ensured that every person, whatever the language they speak, has the opportunity to study in their mother tongue in the state," she said in a post on X.

BANGLADESH RESTORES FULL VISA SERVICES FOR INDIANS, SIGNALLING DIPLOMATIC THAW UNDER RAHMAN

Diary Times Desk : In a significant sign of improving relations, Bangladesh has restored full visa and consular services for Indian citizens across its missions in India nearly two months after suspending them amid political unrest and diplomatic tension, official sources confirmed here on Saturday. Officials said the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi and its assistant missions have begun issuing all categories of visas — including tourist and medical — ending a freeze imposed in December following protests and security concerns around diplomatic premises. The move comes days after the swearing-in of Bangladesh's new Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, widely seen as signalling a reset in ties between New Delhi and Dhaka. Diplomatic sources said both sides have begun quiet engagement to restore normal people-to-people travel, business visits and medical movement — sectors that had been severely affected by the suspension.

The services had been halted on December 22 last year after violence, threats to diplomatic facilities and attacks on missions during political turmoil in Bangladesh. With the political transition in Dhaka now complete, officials expect a thaw in ties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier.

EOW ARRESTS RELIANCE POWER CFO, 2 OTHERS IN FAKE BANK GUARANTEE CASE

Diary Times Desk : The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) on Tuesday said that it has arrested the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Reliance Power Limited and two others for allegedly preparing and using forged bank guarantees to secure tenders. The arrested individuals were identified as Ashok Kumar Pal (50), CFO of Reliance Power Ltd; Partha Sarthi Biswal (54), managing director of Biswal Tradelink Pvt Ltd; and Amarnath Dutta, an official added. The case was registered based on a complaint filed by Biblesh Meena, manager at Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. It was alleged that Reliance NU BESS Ltd, a subsidiary of Reliance Power Limited, submitted two forged bank guarantees of Rs 68.20 crore each during a tender process, Deputy Commissioner of Police (EOW) Subodh Kumar Goswami stated in a press statement.

CENTRAL FORCES TO BE DEPLOYED IN POLL-BOUND WEST BENGAL FROM MARCH 1

Diary Times Desk : As many as 480 companies of Central Armed Police Forces will be initially deployed in poll-bound West Bengal for area domination, confidence-building measures and other election-related duties from March 1, an EC official said on Saturday. They will also guard EVMs at strong rooms and counting centres during the election process. The Assembly elections in the state are due in a few months.

The official said that the first batch of around 240 companies will be inducted by March 1, while an equal number of companies will join them by March 10. The contingents will include personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, Central Industrial Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the Sashastra Seema Bal. The final electoral roll after the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is scheduled to be published on February 28, while the election schedule is expected to be announced in March.

TN POLLS: DMK FORMS SEAT-SHARING PANEL UNDER T R BAALU FOR TALKS WITH ALLIES

Diary Times Desk : The ruling M. K. Stalin-led Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) has formed a seven-member seat-sharing committee under party's senior leader T R Baalu to hold parleys with its allies, days after it sealed a poll pact with the DMDK. The swift move to rope in the DMDK rendered a blow to its rival AIADMK, which has been attempting to woo the Vijayakanth-founded party to the NDA to collectively take on the DMK in the upcoming Assembly election. DMK said the party was likely to commence seat-sharing negotiations with its allies from February 22. In addition to accommodating the DMDK, the party is likely to allocate more seats to the Congress for this poll. Ruling out any scope for a coalition government in Tamil Nadu, MDMK chief Vaiko, an ally of the DMK, said, the Dravidian major would return to power with an absolute majority of its own. "I am fully confident that DMK president and Chief Minister M K Stalin will form the government again by winning.

MAMATA FELICITATES BJP MP ANANTA MAHARAJ AS HE TURNS UP AT HER PROGRAMME

Diary Times Desk : BJP Rajya Sabha MP Nagen Roy alias Ananta Maharaj, a leader of the Rajbangshi community, was on Saturday felicitated at the International Language Day function in the city attended by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Maharaj, whose relationship with the saffron party has been under strain in recent months, was felicitated by Banerjee as he took a seat on the podium, accompanied by senior ministers and TMC leaders Aroop Biswas and Indranil Sen. Offering him an 'uttariya' and a plaque, Banerjee said, "We are honoured and privileged with your presence. Stay happy and be careful about your health." Her programme was not political; she was attending an event observing International Mother Language Day as the chief minister. Raising speculations over his next political move, Maharaj later told reporters: "The Centre had only been discriminating and neglecting our community.

RAVNEET BITTU PRAYS AT SANT KUTIYA GURDWARA, CAMPAIGNS IN MAMATA BANERJEE'S DEN BHABANIPUR

Diary Times Desk : The BJP on Tuesday fielded its senior Sikh face and Union minister Ravneet Bittu to engage the voters in West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Bhabanipur constituency. Bittu, Union Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing Industries, spent his day interacting with the members of Puniabi community in the CM's high-profile segment. Earlier, he was received by enthusiastic locals, who also organised an election meeting which he addressed. The highlight of Bittu's presence in Bhabanipur was a visit to the revered Gurdwara Sant Kutiya, one of the prominent gurdwaras in east India, where the minister offered prayers. Located on the Harish Mukherjee Road, the gurdwara, founded by Baba Basant Singh, is dedicated to Guru Granth Sahib and is widely respected for its commitment to community service, including free medical initiatives and social outreach programs.

TURBANS TOSSED, GUNFIRE, KIRPANS DRAWN: 11 INJURED IN VIOLENT CLASH AT GERMANY GURDWARA

Diary Times Desk : A violent clash involving more than 40 people armed with pepper spray, knives, kirpans, and reportedly a firearm broke out at Gurdwara Singh Sabha in Duisburg, located in the German city of Moers in North Rhine-Westphalia. As per a report by German newspaper Bild, the incident left at least 11 people injured and triggered a major police response, including the deployment of special tactical units.

Eyewitnesses said the clash stemmed from disputes over the gurdwara's finances and management, though German police have not confirmed a specific cause, the report stated. The violence is believed to be linked to a long-running internal conflict within the gurdwara community, centred on committee control, influence, and alleged financial disagreements. "The background is a dispute between former committee members and the current ones. It also involves money belonging to the community. There have been problems and trouble for quite some time. But mainly it's about influence and who has the say here in the temple," a witness told Bild.

TRUMP SAYS IRAN TO SEND DELEGATION FOR TALKS, WARNS OF STRIKES IF DEAL FAILS

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said Iran will send a delegation for negotiations with Washington, but warned that the United States is prepared to resume bombing if a deal is not reached before the ceasefire deadline. In an interview with CNBC, Trump struck a combative tone, asserting that Tehran had "no choice" but to come to the table, even as he signalled that military action remains imminent if talks fail to yield results quickly. "Well, as I said two days ago, when they said they won't send them, I said they'll be sending them. They have no choice but to send them… I think we're going to end up with a great deal," Trump said, expressing confidence in the outcome of the negotiations.

'BETTER THAN DAVOS': ABBOTT PRAISES RAISINA DIALOGUE'S RISING GLOBAL PROFILE

Diary Times Desk : Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott has praised India's flagship strategic forum, the Raisina Dialogue, describing it as "better than Davos" and highlighting its growing stature in global geopolitical discussions. In a post on X, Abbott said the New Delhi conference has emerged as a major international platform and favourably compared it with the annual gathering of global leaders and business elites at World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Switzerland. He suggested that the Raisina Dialogue offers a more substantive and less pretentious space for discussions on global challenges. Held annually in New Delhi since 2016, the Raisina Dialogue is jointly organised by India's Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation. Over the years, it has grown into India's premier forum on geopolitics and geo-economics, drawing participation from ministers, former heads of state, diplomats, military leaders, industry executives and scholars from across the world. Abbott also drew comparisons with the Boao Forum for Asia, the China-backed conference often seen as Beijing's platform for shaping regional economic and strategic narratives.

FLOYD MAYWEATHER TO END 9-YEAR RETIREMENT, RETURN TO PRO BOXING THIS SUMMER

Diary Times Desk : Floyd Mayweather says he is ending his nine-year retirement and returning to competitive boxing this summer. Mayweather, who turns 49 on Tuesday, hasn't fought in a real boxing match since 2017, when he beat Conor McGregor. Following that big-money bout against a mixed martial artist, Mayweather (50-0, 27 KOs) declared himself retired for the third time in his career. The former five-division world champion has still been in the ring regularly throughout his 40s with a series of lucrative exhibition bouts against the likes of online influencer Logan Paul, YouTuber Mikuri Asakura and John Gotti III, the grandson of the infamous mafia boss. Mayweather already has announced yet another exhibition coming up this spring against 59-year-old Mike Tyson, although no location or television partner has been confirmed. But Mayweather says he is also returning to real ring competition this year under a promotional deal with CSI Sports/Fight Sports.

"BRAZIL IS IMPORTANT STRATEGIC PARTNER, KEY MEMBER OF BRICS," MEA SECY (EAST) SAYS

Diary Times Desk : Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (East), P Kumaran, said on Saturday that Brazil underlined the significant partnership between Brazil and India, with the former being a key member of BRICS too. Kumaran, while speaking at the Special Briefing by MEA on State visit of President of Brazil to India, said that during the meeting at Hyderabad House, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva exchanged views on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest, including cooperation in multilateral fora. MEA's statement comes as India began the term of its BRICS presidency earlier in the year. "India holds the presidency of BRICS this year and Brazil is an important strategic partner and a key member of BRICS. During the meeting today at Hyderabad House, PM and President Lula held bilateral conversations and exchanged views on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest, including cooperation in multilateral fora, the need to reform global governance and matters of importance to the global south. Prime Minister Modi hosted a lunch in honour of the visiting dignitary. The state visit gave the leaders an opportunity to review the entire gamut of our partnership, including trade and investments, oil and gas, renewable energy, mining and critical minerals, defense and security, agriculture and livestock.

APPLE'S TIM COOK TO STEP DOWN AS CEO IN SEPTEMBER

Diary Times Desk : Tim Cook will step down as Chief Executive Officer of Apple Inc. and take over as executive chairman of the company's board, with John Ternus set to become the new CEO from September 1, the company announced on Monday. The decision was approved by Apple's Board of Directors as part of a long-planned leadership transition. Cook will continue as CEO through the summer and work closely with Ternus to ensure a smooth handover. Currently serving as Senior Vice President of Hardware Engineering, Ternus has been a key figure in developing Apple's major products and will now take charge of leading the company. After stepping into his new role as executive chairman, Cook will continue to support the company, including engaging with policymakers around the world. In a community letter to the company, Cook wrote, "For the past 15 years I've started just about every morning the same way. I open my email and I read notes I received the day before from Apple's users all over the world. You share little pieces of your lives with me.

AUSTRALIAN POLICE FATALLY SHOOT SUSPECT IN 3-HOUR STANDOFF AFTER 2 OFFICERS KILLED

Diary Times Desk : Australian police said they believe they shot dead a suspect Monday accused of killing two police officers and seriously wounding a third in a remote forest region seven months ago.

There had been no confirmed sightings of Dezi Freeman, 56, since he allegedly opened fire on police officers who came to serve a warrant at his home near Porepunkah in Victoria state northeast of Melbourne on August 26 last year, Victoria's Chief Commissioner of Police Mike Bush said on Monday.

A man believed to be Freeman was fatally shot by police on Monday at a remote location near Thologolong, around two hours' drive north of Porepunkah, a police statement said.

"We believe it is Freeman, but we have to go through a formal identification process," Bush told reporters in Melbourne. Identification could take up to 48 hours through processes including fingerprinting. Heavily armed Special Operations Group tactical police were involved in a standoff for three hours before the suspect was shot. He had been inside a shelter like a shipping container and did take up a police offer to surrender, Bush said.

TAIWAN DETECTS 8 SORTIES OF CHINESE AIRCRAFT, 7 VESSELS AROUND ITSELF

Diary Times Desk : Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense detected the presence of eight sorties of Chinese military aircraft and seven Chinese naval vessels operating around its territorial waters as of 6 am (local time) on Saturday. All the sorties of PLA aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern, central and southwestern ADIZ. In a post on X, the MND said, "8 sorties of PLA aircraft and 7 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 8 out of 8 sorties crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern, central and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded." Earlier on Friday, the MND detected 14 sorties and six naval vessels. Of the 14, 10 sorties crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern, central and southwestern ADIZ. In a post on X, the MND said, "14 sorties of PLA aircraft and 6 PLAN vessels.

EARTHQUAKE OF MAGNITUDE 3.8 STRIKES MYANMAR

Diary Times Desk : n earthquake of magnitude 3.8 struck Myanmar on Saturday, a statement by the National Center for Seismology (NCS) said. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 70km. In a post on X, the NCS said, "EQ of M: 3.8, On: 21/02/2026 17:01:33 IST, Lat: 20.42 N, Long: 94.77 E, Depth: 70 Km, Location: Myanmar." Shallow earthquakes are generally more dangerous than deep earthquakes. This is because the seismic waves from shallow earthquakes have a shorter distance to travel to the surface, resulting in stronger ground shaking and potentially more damage to structures and greater casualties. Myanmar is vulnerable to hazards from moderate and large magnitude earthquakes and tsunamis along its long coastline. Myanmar is wedged between four tectonic plates (the Indian, Eurasian, Sunda, and Burma plates) that interact in active geological processes.

NEPAL PARLIAMENT TO HOLD SESSION LATER THIS WEEK, FIRST SINCE THE SEPTEMBER'S GEN-Z PROTEST

Diary Times Desk : The first session of Nepal's House of Representatives has been summoned from Thursday onwards by President Ram Chandra Paudel, the office of the President announced on Tuesday. Issuing a release, the President's Office announced that the house meeting has been summoned on the recommendation of the cabinet under the leadership of Prime Minister Balendra Shah. "Honorable President Shri Ram Chandra Poudel, pursuant to Clause (1) of Article 93 of the Constitution of Nepal, has called a session of both Houses of the Federal Parliament on Thursday, Chaitra 19, 2082 BS at 14:00 at the Federal Parliament Building, Singha Durbar, on the recommendation of the Government of Nepal, Council of Ministers dated 2082/12/16," the release from the President Office reads. Earlier, the government spokesperson Sasmit Pokharel had confirmed that the Cabinet meeting on Monday took a decision to recommend the President to summon the session from Thursday.

"CAPTIVATED," CHINESE ENVOY TO INDIA SAYS ON HIS JAIPUR VISIT

Diary Times Desk : Chinese Ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, visited the pink city Jaipur and said he was captivated by its beauty. The visit hints at a broader approach to boost tourism between both the nations. In a post on X, he said, "There are always moments when I am captivated by India's radiant culture and beautiful architecture, and Jaipur is undoubtedly one of them." Earlier on February 1, the Consulate General of India in Shanghai, under the leadership of Consul General Pratik Mathur, warmly welcomed the resumption of Air India's direct flight services between Shanghai and New Delhi, marking a major step forward in restoring people-to-people, business and institutional connectivity between India and China. According to an official release, the inaugural Shanghai-New Delhi flight departed today from Shanghai Pudong International Airport, carrying over 230 passengers on board the Boeing 787 aircraft. The relaunch comes after a gap of nearly six years and represents a significant milestone in normalising bilateral air connectivity following the suspension of services in early 2020.

CHINA ACCUSED OF EXPORTING UYGHUR SURVEILLANCE AND INTIMIDATION WORLDWIDE

Diary Times Desk : The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) has released its weekly brief, highlighting a series of international developments that it says reflect both the intensifying repression of Uyghurs and growing global scrutiny of China's policies. On 15 February, WUC leaders joined approximately 70 members of the Swiss Uyghur diaspora for a community gathering in Switzerland. President Turgunjan Alawdun and Vice President Zumretay Arkin addressed the event, describing it as a show of unity amid mounting concerns over what rights groups term transnational repression. Alarm has also spread in Germany following reports that surveillance systems manufactured by Hikvision and Dahua Technology are widely deployed in airports, railway stations and public institutions. The WUC warned that the presence of such technology, linked by activists to monitoring practices in East Turkistan, could expose vulnerabilities and erode public trust. The group has sought clarification from German authorities and initiated legal proceedings in Spain and France against the manufacturers. Meanwhile, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Committee of Experts reviewed China's adherence to conventions prohibiting forced labour. Citing trade union submissions, the committee noted allegations that millions of Uyghurs and Tibetans were transferred under labour programmes in 2024.

IRAN FIRES SURPRISE 4,000-KM MISSILES AT US-UK JOINT BASE IN INDIAN OCEAN

Diary Times Desk : Iran expanded the ambit of the West Asian conflict and launched an unsuccessful twin missile attack on Diego Garcia, the joint US-UK military base some 3,800 km away in the Indian Ocean, even as the UN nuclear watchdog confirmed that key Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz was targeted in a fresh strike on Saturday. Iran also claimed to have hit an Israeli F-16 fighter jet. The Diego Garcia attack showed Tehran's hidden ability that it had missiles that could travel almost 4,000 km, a possibility flagged in January by 'Iran Watch', a think-tank operated by US-based Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control. One missile reportedly failed in flight while the other was intercepted by a US warship mid-flight. The Diego Garcia base is on a small, remote atoll but is strategically located and capable of accommodating long-range bombers. It has been used as a launchpad for operations in West Asia for years.

BANCO DO BRASIL AIMS TO BOOST BRAZIL-INDIA TRADE TO USD 100 BILLION: TARCIANA MEDEIROS

Diary Times Desk : Banco do Brasil President Tarciana Medeiros on Saturday said the bank is prepared to serve as a strategic bridge to expand Brazil-India bilateral trade to USD 100 billion, underscoring the need to deepen what she termed a structuring partnership between the two economies, according to Brasil 247. Addressing the Brazil-India Business Forum in the national capital, Medeiros began by highlighting the symbolic significance of New Delhi. She described the city as representing both the heritage of one of the world's oldest civilisations and the dynamism of a fast-growing economy projecting strongly into the future. As reported by Brasil 247, she acknowledged the presence of Jorge Viana, President of ApexBrasil, and extended greetings to women leaders attending the forum, including Otilide, Simone Lipante, Ana Teresa and Minister Luciana Santos. She also lauded India's ongoing efforts toward inclusion.

PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT PUSHES POVERTY, INEQUALITY TO RECORD HIGHS

Diary Times Desk : Pakistan's poverty rate has soared to 29%, the highest in 11 years, while income inequality has climbed to its worst level in nearly three decades, exposing deep cracks in the country's economic management. According to a government survey, nearly 70 million Pakistanis now live below the monthly poverty threshold of Rs 8,484, as reported by The Express Tribune. According to The Express Tribune, the preliminary findings for fiscal year 2024-25 show poverty has jumped 32% compared to 2018-19, when the last survey was conducted. The poverty ratio stood at 21.9% in 2019 but has now surged to 28.9%, marking the highest level since 2014. At the same time, income inequality has reached 32.7, the steepest since 1998. Rural communities have borne the brunt of the crisis. Poverty in villages rose sharply from 28.2% to 36.2%, while urban poverty climbed from 11% to 17.4%. Provincial data paints.

OVER HALF OF COUNTRIES HAVE BANNED PHONES IN SCHOOLS: UNESCO BY GUNJAN SHARMA

Diary Times Desk : More than half of the countries have banned phones in schools amid mounting concerns about declining attention in classrooms and cyberbullying, according to the UNSECO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) team. The team found that girls are twice as likely as boys to suffer from eating disorders exacerbated by social media usage. Facebook's own research revealed that 32 per cent of teenage girls felt worse about their bodies after using Instagram.

The report noted alarming trends related to TikTok's algorithm, which targets teenagers with body image content every 39 seconds and promotes content related to eating disorders every eight minutes.

"Recent global monitoring shows that 114 education systems now have a national ban on mobile phones in schools, representing 58 per cent of countries worldwide. The expansion has been rapid. Less than 1 in 4 countries (24 per cent) had bans in June 2023, when it was first monitored in the 2023 GEM Report. By early 2025, this had risen to 40 per cent, and by March 2026, that share is almost 20 per cent points higher," a senior member of GEM told PTI.

FAULTY HIV FIGURES RAISE ALARM IN NA PANEL AS PAKISTAN RISKS GLOBAL EMBARRASSMENT

Diary Times Desk : Pakistan's Parliamentary body has raised red flags over what it termed as "unreliable and incomplete statistics" being reported on HIV/AIDS in the nation, cautioning that the country could face humiliation at international platforms if inaccurate data is forwarded to global health agencies, as reported by The Express Tribune. According to The Express Tribune, the concerns were voiced during a meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on National Health Services, chaired by Mahesh Kumar Malani. Lawmakers scrutinised figures presented by the health ministry and questioned their credibility, describing them as inconsistent with provincial data. Briefing the committee, officials said that the National AIDS Programme spends roughly $300 to $500 per year on each registered HIV patient. However, PPP MNA Shazia Sobia Somro sharply criticised the ministry's report, arguing that it failed to account for a significant number of cases across the country.

VALE CEO FLAGS ENORMOUS GROWTH POTENTIAL IN INDIA, SEEKS LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS IN STRATEGIC MINERALS SECTOR

Diary Times Desk : Vale CEO Gustavo Pimenta has identified India as one of the most promising global markets for iron ore and strategic minerals, underscoring the company's intent to deepen partnerships in the country. He was speaking at the Brazil-India Business Forum in New Delhi on Saturday. Highlighting mining's central role in modern life, Pimenta said the sector will gain even greater relevance amid the global energy transition and rapid digitalisation. Citing industry estimates, he noted that mineral supply will need to expand five to six times the current installed capacity to meet future demand, presenting a significant challenge and opportunity for mining companies, as cited by Brasil 247 Pimenta said Vale's engagement with India has grown steadily. While sales in the Indian market were modest three to four years ago, the company sold 10 million tonnes of iron ore in India last year. With India currently producing around 180 million tonnes of steel annually -- a figure projected to exceed 300 million tonnes in the next decade -- he described the country as a high-potential destination for infrastructure.

FORMER FBI DIRECTOR ROBERT MUELLER, WHO INVESTIGATED RUSSIA-TRUMP CAMPAIGN TIES, DIES

Diary Times Desk : Robert S Mueller III, the FBI director who transformed the nation's premier law enforcement agency into a terrorism-fighting force after the September 11, 2001, attacks and who later became special counsel in charge of investigating ties between Russia and Donald Trump's presidential campaign, has died. He was 81. "With deep sadness, we are sharing the news that Bob passed away on Friday night," his family said in a statement Saturday. "His family asks that their privacy be respected." At the FBI, Mueller set about almost immediately overhauling the bureau's mission to meet the law enforcement needs of the 21st century, beginning his 12-year tenure just one week before the September 11 attacks and serving across presidents of both political parties. He was nominated by Republican President George W. Bush. The cataclysmic event instantaneously switched the bureau's top priority.

BANGLADESH PAYS HEARTFELT TRIBUTE TO THE LANGUAGE MARTYRS OF 1952

Diary Times Desk : Bangladesh has paid deep respect and homage to the immortal martyrs of the Language Movement. On this day in 1952, February 21, young students took to the streets of Dhaka and shed their blood to establish the dignity of their mother tongue, Bengali. The West Pakistani regime had declared Urdu as the sole state language of Pakistan. In protest, students in Dhaka rose up, and the regime opened fire on the demonstrators. However, the movement continued to grow, and eventually the West Pakistani authorities were forced to recognize Bengali as a state language. In 1999, UNESCO declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day. Like people around the world, Bangladesh appropriately pays tribute to the immortal martyrs of the Language Movement and expresses profound respect for them. In the early hours of the day, President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman paid floral tributes at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka to mark.

EAM JAISHANKAR CALLS ON BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA

Diary Times Desk : External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday met Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva here in the national capital and appreciated his guidance on taking forward the strategic partnership between New Delhi and Brasilia. In a post on X on Saturday, he expressed optimism that his meetings with PM Modi would impart new impetus to the relationship. "Honoured to call on President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil @LulaOficial, visiting India on a State Visit. Deeply appreciate his warm sentiments and guidance on advancing our Strategic Partnership. Confident that his meetings with PM @narendramodi later today will impart a new momentum to our ties." Earlier today, a ceremonial welcome was held on Saturday at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan for Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is on a state visit to India. President Lula was accorded the Guard of Honour at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"PEACE IS THE BEST MEDICINE": WHO CHIEF TEDROS URGES RESTRAINT AMID STRIKES NEAR NUCLEAR SITES IN WEST ASIA

Diary Times Desk : World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on Sunday, called for maximum military restraint as the conflict in the Middle East escalates, warning that attacks near nuclear-related facilities in Israel and Iran pose "escalating threat to public health and environmental safety".

In a post on X, Tedros said, "The war in the Middle East has reached a perilous stage with strikes reportedly hitting the Natanz Enrichment Complex in Iran, and the Israeli city of Dimona, where a nuclear facility is located."

He added that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is examining the incidents reported in southeastern Iran and in the Israeli city of Dimona.

"@iaeaorg is looking into incidents reported yesterday in southeastern Iran, and in Israel's city of Dimona. No indications of abnormal or increased off-site radiation levels have been reported," Tedros said.

Highlighting the potential consequences of such attacks, he warned, " Attacks targeting nuclear sites create an escalating threat to public health and environmental safety."

'OUR TRADE DEALS COVERING OVER HALF OF WORLD'S POPULATION REMAIN IN FULL EFFECT': US TRADE REP JAMIESON GREER

Diary Times Desk : US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on Friday said that the trade deals signed by the United States with countries from across the world would continue to remain in place despite the Supreme Court ruling and listed several other tools which maight be used to implement the trade deals, noting that while the tools may change, the policy remains the same. He made the remarks in an interview to Fox News. Sharing the details in a post on X, Greer said, "Our trade deals covering over half of the world's population remain in full effect." On the tariffs he noted that trade deals have opened up market access and cover more than half of the global population, adding that he expects the partner countries to "honour them". "It helped us obtain tons of deals covering half of the world's population and opening up market access we haven't enjoyed for 30 years and we have these agreements so we'll just use a different tool. The tools may change but the policy remains the same and IEEPA was a part of that", Greer said.

"BLENDING AI WITH CULTURAL PRACTICES CAN HELP HEAL FROM ILLNESSES," SAYS DIRECTOR OF DEVIKA DANCE THEATRE, DEVIKA RAO

Diary Times Desk : As the AI-India Impact summit come to a close one of the unique aspects was the blending AI with cultural practices. Director of Devika Dance Theatre, University of Leeds, Devika Rao says this can help deal with illnesses like Dementia and Parkinson's better. She said, "I am presently working with the NHS UK as a collaborator, and also with the Arts Council and DCMS UK. Here, I am exploring the role of AI in cultural education because my roots are connected to Karnataka, and much of my work is based on cultural education and creative health. We are trying to connect literacy with classical Indian dance, which has a texture enriched by Sanskrit traditions. These expressions take different forms, whether through a bhajan or a padam. What is particularly interesting in this AI summit is how AI can collaborate with the Ministry of Culture in India and connect with heritage communities in the UK." On how exactly it will help in dealing with illnesses, she said, "We also do a lot of Yoga activities for Cancer patients. When it comes to Parkinson's disease, the solution lies in rhythm.

NHRC NOTICE TO MALABAR GOLD OVER COLLABORATION WITH PAKISTANI INFLUENCER

Diary Times Desk : The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to Kerala-based jewellery group Malabar Gold and Diamonds over alleged FEMA violations and collaboration with a Pakistani influencer known for her "anti-India" remarks. In a communication dated February 20, the Commission noted that the complaint alleged potential violations of human rights, and directed multiple authorities to submit an action taken report within two weeks. The notice was issued under Section 12 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The NHRC instructed the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, the Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and the Director-General of Police, Kerala, to examine different aspects of the complaint, including regulatory compliance and public order concerns. It also observed that the allegations prima facie appear to raise human rights issues warranting examination. The rights body also raised questions relating to corporate due diligence, cross-border financial compliance and regulatory adherence under the Indian law.

STUDYING IMPLICATIONS OF US SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT, TRUMP ADMINISTRATION DECISIONS: COMMERCE MINISTRY

Diary Times Desk : The government said on Saturday that it is studying the implications of the US Supreme Court judgement on tariffs and the steps announced by the President Trump Administration. "We have noted the US Supreme Court judgement on tariffs yesterday. President Trump has also addressed a press conference in that regard. Some steps have been announced by the US Administration. We are studying all these developments for their implications," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a brief statement. In a major blow to US President Donald Trump's signature trade policy, the US Supreme Court on Friday ruled against most of his sweeping tariff measures. Trump later signed an order making 10 per cent global tariff on all countries, effective "almost immediately". A White House official told ANI that India is expected to pay this tariff, and this new tariff will remain in place until another authority.

VEDANTA MOVES NCLAT, CHALLENGES NCLT NOD TO ADANI'S BID FOR ACQUIRING JAIPRAKASH ASSOCIATES

Diary Times Desk : Business conglomerate Vedanta Group has approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), challenging the NCLT's approval to Adani Group's bid for acquiring Jaiprakash Associates Ltd for Rs 14,535 crore. Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Group was in the race to acquire Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) through an insolvency process, but the lenders in November last year approved the resolution plan or bid of Adani Enterprises Ltd. On March 17, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Allahabad bench, approved Adani Enterprises Ltd's Rs 14,535 crore bid to acquire Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) through the insolvency process. In a regulatory filing, JAL had informed that the NCLT, Allahabad bench, has "orally pronounced an order on March 17, 2026" approving the resolution plan submitted by Adani Enterprises Ltd.

CORPORATE LAWS AMENDMENT BILL TO BE INTRODUCED IN LOK SABHA ON MONDAY

Diary Times Desk : The Central Government will introduce the Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, in the Lok Sabha on Monday, which aims to amend the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, 2008, and the Companies Act. According to the list of business of the Lower House, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will introduce the Bill. The proposed legislation aims to amend the Companies Act, 2013, and the LLP Act, 2008, to facilitate ease of doing business and address gaps identified by the Company Law Committee in its 2022 report. The Bill is expected to incorporate CSR-related relaxations, based on the recommendations of the high-level committee on non-financial regulatory reforms led by former Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba.

These include proposals to exempt certain classes of companies from mandatory CSR obligations, thereby reducing compliance burden, especially for smaller or less resource-intensive entities.

WEST ASIA CONFLICT, CRUDE OIL PRICES TO STEER STOCK MARKETS IN HOLIDAY-SHORTENED WEEK: ANALYSTS

Diary Times Desk : Developments related to the ongoing conflict in West Asia and its impact on crude oil prices will continue to rule investors' sentiment in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said. Besides, trends in global markets, trading activity of foreign investors and rupee-dollar movement would also drive momentum in equities.

Stock markets would remain closed on Thursday for Shri Ram Navami. "This week is expected to remain data-sensitive amid ongoing global uncertainties. Developments in the West Asia conflict and movements in crude oil prices will continue to act as key external drivers and are likely to dictate the near-term market trend. "On the domestic front, investors will closely monitor HSBC Flash PMI data for manufacturing, services, and composite segments, which will provide an early indication of business activity trends," Ajit Mishra—SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 88,180 crore (about USD 9.6 billion) from Indian equities so far this month, weighed down by escalating tensions in West Asia, a weakening rupee and concerns over the impact of elevated crude oil prices on India's growth and corporate earnings.

SILVERLINE TECHNOLOGIES RECEIVES LETTER OF INTENT FROM UAE-BASED TRUELEDGER TECHNOLOGIES FZE FOR POTENTIAL STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

Diary Times Desk : The India AI Impact Summit 2026 highlighted India's potential to lead in artificial intelligence through its unique digital infrastructure and talent scale. Industry tech leaders indicated that the event served as a central platform for showcasing domestic technological advancements and fostering international collaboration. Sanjeev Bikhchandani, Founder of Info Edge, stated that the summit effectively brought all Indian AI companies and technologies onto one platform. "India will get a lot in the AI summit. I think what the AI summit has done is bring all Indian AI companies and technologies onto one platform for everyone to see. Awareness has spread," Bikhchandani said. He noted that the general public became more aware of the technology due to the significant turnout. He added, "I think a trade deal with the US, who is largest trading partner, will help India a lot."

THIS SPRING, THE BATTLE FOR 'FREEDOM' BEGINS ON AWAJI ISLAND IN JAPAN

Diary Times Desk : TV Anime "Attack on Titan" × Nijigen no Mori Collaboration Event • March 14, 2026 – December 13, 2026 • Ticket Reservations Open from February 16th Nijigen no Mori Inc. (Head Office: Awaji City, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan; President and CEO: Hiroshige Sadamatsu) will hold a limited-time collaboration event where guests can experience the world of the TV anime "Attack on Titan" at the anime park "Nijigen no Mori," in Hyogo Prefectural Awajishimaland Park, Japan from Saturday, March 14, 2026, to Sunday, December 13, 2026. Starting from February 16th, tickets for this event can be reserved via the official Nijigen no Mori website (nijigennomori.com). In this event, guests can enjoy the world of the TV anime "Attack on Titan" through two separate immersive experiences held by day and at night: the nighttime event "Attack on Titan THE NIGHT WALK -Beyond the Walls-" and the daytime event Attack on Titan Stamp Rally in Nijigen no Mori". In the nighttime event, participants will walk approximately 1.2 km.

MCAP OF FIVE OF TOP-10 MOST VALUED FIRMS ERODES BY RS 1 LAKH CR; HDFC BANK BIGGEST LAGGARD

Diary Times Desk : The combined market valuation of five of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 1 lakh crore last week, with HDFC Bank taking the biggest hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex dipped 30.96 points, or 0.04 per cent, and the NSE Nifty slipped 36.6 points, or 0.15 per cent.

"Markets ended the week on a largely flat note with a negative bias, reflecting underlying caution among participants. The tone remained positive during the first three sessions; however, a sharp decline on Thursday erased the gains, followed by a volatile final session," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

While HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever were the laggards, Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) emerged as the winners.
The combined market valuation of the five firms eroded by Rs 1,02,771.87 crore.

GOVT ASKS GAS DISTRIBUTION FIRMS TO PRIORITISE PNG CONNECTIONS, INCREASES COMMERCIAL LPG ALLOCATION AMID WEST ASIA CONFLICT

Diary Times Desk : The Government of India has asked city gas distribution (CGD) companies to prioritise piped natural gas (PNG) connections for commercial establishments, and has also taken several steps to ensure stable fuel supplies as conflict in West Asia continues to impact energy flows. In an update released on Saturday, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said, "City Gas Distribution (CGD) entities have been advised by Govt. of India to prioritise PNG connections for commercial establishments such as restaurants, hotels and canteens across all their Gas, to address concerns regarding the availability of commercial LPG."

The ministry added that the government has also asked ministries and state governments to speed up approvals related to gas infrastructure. It said, "Govt. of India vide letter dated 19.03.2026 have requested all concerned Central Government Ministries to issue necessary directions... for immediate fast tracking and disposal of all pending and new permissions related to CGD infrastructure." The government has also encouraged government offices and establishments to move towards PNG usage where possible. "All Central Government establishments/Colonies/Officers/Canteens may also be advised to switch over to PNG wherever the same is available," the ministry said. To support commercial users, the government has increased the allocation of commercial LPG cylinders. According to the ministry, "Govt. of India vide letter dated 21.03.2026 has allowed another 20% allocation of commercial LPG to States, which would take overall allocation to 50%." "This additional 20% allocation shall be given on priority to sectors like restaurants, dhabas, hotels, industrial canteens, food processing/dairy, subsidised canteens/outlets run by State Govt. or local bodies for food, community kitchens, 5 Kg FTL for migrant labourers," the ministry added.

HIMACHAL MINISTER VIKRAMADITYA CALLS ON SHIVRAJ CHOUHAN FOR PENDING ROAD PROJECTS IN DODRA KWAR

Diary Times Desk : Himachal Pradesh minister Vikramaditya Singh on Saturday called on Union Minister for Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan in New Delhi and took up the issue of pending road projects in extremely remote and high altitude area of Dodra Kwar in Shimla district. Singh, Himachal's public works minister, appraised Chouhan that a portion of the road sanctioned for the Dodra Kwar area under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) Phase-I has not yet been completed "due to extremely tough geographical conditions, difficult terrain, harsh weather and a very limited working season". He said the road is highly critical for the rural population there, for disaster management and emergency health services and the supply of essential commodities. Singh requested for special relaxations, additional financial support and technical assistance for the pending road construction.

NEW VACCINE LAUNCHED TO PROTECT AGAINST TETANUS AND DIPHTHERIA AT CRI IN KASAULI

Diary Times Desk : Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare JP Nadda on Saturday launched the Tetanus and Adult Diphtheria (Td) vaccine at the Central Research Institute (CRI), Kasauli. Extensive scientific evidence indicates that widespread childhood immunisation with DPT vaccines has significantly reduced the incidence of diphtheria and tetanus in many countries. However, antibody levels — particularly for diphtheria — tend to decline over time, necessitating booster doses. In view of this, the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2006 recommended that countries transition from the Tetanus Toxoid (TT) vaccine to the Td vaccine. This recommendation was reaffirmed in the WHO Tetanus Vaccine Position Paper (2017) and through deliberations of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) in 2002 and 2016. Terming the launch a major step in safeguarding the nation's health, Nadda said the rollout of a domestically manufactured vaccine marks a key achievement in attaining self-sufficiency in vaccine and drug manufacturing in India.

MASSIVE LANDSLIDE OCCURS IN HIMACHAL'S MANDI; 9 HOUSES EVACUATED

Diary Times Desk : Directions were issued to evacuate nine houses in Ropdu village in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district on Sunday following a massive landslide. A landslide occurred in Kotli subdivision following intermittent rains over the past three days. A cow shed was completely damaged, while large boulders and debris remain precariously perched on the hillside, continuing to pose a grave and immediate threat to the village below. Officials and the former Pradhan (village head) rushed to the scene and directed the evacuation of the nine houses that had been endangered. A video of the landslide went viral on the internet. Hill-cutting work is currently being carried out at the location over the village, residents said. Meanwhile, the local Meteorological station on Sunday issued a yellow warning of thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds with speeds of 30-40 kmph at isolated places in Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, and Mandi districts on Monday and Thursday. It also predicted a wet spell in the state over the next five days, even as the weather remained dry on Sunday and bright sunshine greeted the people.

HIMACHAL PRADESH POLICE DETAIN 96 DRUG TRAFFICKERS IN 'ANTI-CHITTA' CRACKDOWN

Diary Times Desk : The Himachal Pradesh Police has detained 96 drug traffickers under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT-NDPS) Act, 1988, as part of the "anti-chitta" drive launched by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on November 15, 2025. This includes 65 drug traffickers detained till December 31, 2025, and 31 detained in 2026 so far. Preventive detention orders have been issued against eight notorious drug traffickers, including five from Shimla district and one each from Dehra, Nurpur, and Una. A spokesperson for the Himachal Pradesh Police stated that the police are carrying out well-planned and coordinated operations across the state under the PIT-NDPS Act to break organised drug trafficking networks. The police worked closely across districts, used accurate intelligence, and followed a clear legal plan to dismantle the organised drug supply network. A detailed investigation is underway to check the movable and immovable properties of the detained traffickers. If any property is found to have been bought with money earned from illegal drug activities, it will be seized according to the law. "This step aims not only to punish the offenders but also to break.

PUNJAB, HIMACHAL RESIDENTS HOLD JOINT PROTEST AGAINST TAX HIKE: 'BORDERS MAY EXIST ON MAPS, BUT NOT IN OUR HEARTS'

Diary Times Desk : Residents of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh came together at the Mehatpur entry toll barrier in Himachal Pradesh to protest against the sharp increase in entry tax on vehicles registered outside the state. The protest reflected deep public anger and shared social and economic ties between people living on both sides of the border. The Himachal Pradesh Government recently raised the entry tax for vehicles registered outside the state from Rs 70 to 170, triggering resentment among daily commuters, traders, lawyers, employees, and families who cross the border frequently for work, education, healthcare, and social obligations. Protesters said the hike was sudden, steep, and insensitive to the realities of border populations. The gathering saw slogans against the tax hike and appeals for its immediate rollback. From the Punjab side, the protest was led by common people residing on state borders and BJP leader Rakesh Pammi. From the Himachal side, leadership came from BJP MLA from Una and former state BJP president Satpal Satti. Subhash Sharma, state vice-president of Punjab BJP, said, "Political borders should not become walls between people who have lived like one family for generations.

YOUR HOROSCOPE
22-04-2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CANADA SEEKS TO WITHHOLD SENSITIVE NATIONAL SECURITY EVIDENCE IN NIJJAR MURDER TRIAL

Diary Times Desk : After accusing Indian agents of involvement in the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Canada's justice department is now seeking to withhold certain sensitive national security evidence in the ongoing trial. The case has remained a major irritant in India-Canada relations since then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau first publicly alleged Indian involvement in September 2023. According to Global News, federal lawyers representing Canada's Attorney General have filed an application in Federal Court requesting permission to suppress specific evidence, arguing that its disclosure would be "injurious to international relations and national security." The application was filed under Section 38 of the Canada Evidence Act. The report further stated that a notice of application submitted to the Federal Court indicates the federal Attorney General received four notices during 2024 and 2025 flagging sensitive or potentially injurious information related to the case.

GANG'S SMART MOVES FAIL TO KEEP IT OUT OF POLICE POLICE NET; 6 ARRESTED FOR HIGH-PROFILE THEFTS

Diary Times Desk : Faridkot police have busted a notorious inter-district gang responsible for high-profile thefts across Punjab, with the arrest of six people. The police also recovered Rs 2.20 lakh in cash, along with a .32 bore revolver from their possession. The accused were identified as Mangal Singh, alias Akash of Ferozepur, already facing two NDPS cases, Nirmala Devi, of Ferozepur, Rita Rani of Fazilka, Pappu Singh, alias Toti of Fazilka, Sita Rani, Ferozepur, and Veer Singh, alias Veeru of Ferozepur. A daring robbery at an oil factory in Jaito on February 7 has triggered a police investigation and search operation against the accused after they had stolen Rs 15.50 lakh in cash, a licensed revolver, and important documents. SSP Dr. Pragya Jain said the gang employed highly sophisticated and deceptive tactics to mislead the police: The female members of the gang would conduct "recce" (spying) during the day at factories, shops, and houses to identify targets.

PUNJAB EX-MINISTER LALJIT BHULLAR, FATHER BOOKED AFTER WAREHOUSING OFFICIAL'S DEATH SPARKS ROW

Diary Times Desk : The Amritsar police on Sunday registered a case against former Punjab transport minister Laljit Bhullar after Punjab Warehousing Corporation district manager Gagandeep Randhawa committed suicide on Saturday. The incident has triggered a political storm in Punjab, with opposition parties targeting the AAP government. Prominent political leaders visited the aggrieved family at their house at Ranjit Avenue on Saturday. Besides Bhullar, his father Sukhdev Bhullar and personal assistant Dilbagh Singh have also been booked. They have been booked under Sections 108 (abetment to suicide), 351 (criminal intimidation) and 3(5) (common intention) of the BNS. In her complaint, Upinder Kaur, wife of the deceased, alleged that the former minister, his father and his PA allegedly assaulted her husband and even struck him with a pistol. She alleged that they humiliated him to the extent that he was forced to take his life.

PRO-PEOPLE BUDGET WILL BE PRESENTED ON MARCH 8: PUNJAB CM BHAGWANT MANN

Diary Times Desk : Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Saturday said his government will present its fifth Budget on March 8, reiterating that it will once again be a "pro-people budget" focused on the welfare of every section of society. Mann made this announcement during his visit to Ahmedabad. The Punjan Chief Minister, along with AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, was on a visit to Gujarat on Saturday. Mann said the government has consistently taken pro-people and citizen-centric decisions that have transformed the state's trajectory. He further said that his government will present the Budget on March 8. The Punjab Government will present its fifth Budget in the month of March and we will continue our tradition of presenting a pro-people budget aimed at the welfare of all. "Our sole aim is to ensure the well-being of the common man, and we are making strenuous efforts to achieve this. The forthcoming Budget will again ensure immense benefit to the people of Punjab," said Mann. On the issue of financial rights of states, Mann said that Punjab's legitimate share in the rural development fund has been "undemocratically stalled" by the Centre, a pattern seen in all non-BJP ruled states. "In democracy, the government is of the people, for the people and by the people.

DELHI ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUMMONS TOP PUNJAB OFFICIALS OVER PRIVILEGE MATTER

Diary Times Desk : The Delhi Assembly's Privileges Committee on Saturday issued summons to three senior officials of the Government of Punjab — the Additional Chief Secretary (Home), the Director General of Police (DGP), and the Commissioner of Police, Jalandhar — directing them to appear in person before the committee on February 27. The summons has been issued under the relevant Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the House in connection with an ongoing privilege matter. The committee is scheduled to hold its sitting on February 27 to deliberate on issues arising from alleged remarks attributed to Atishi, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly. According to the Secretariat, the written replies submitted by the concerned Punjab officials pursuant to the committee's earlier directions have been taken on record and will be examined during the forthcoming sitting. However, the committee has reiterated that matters of privilege are personal to the individuals concerned and must be answered in their individual capacity, as conveyed earlier in the Secretariat's communication dated February 13.

YAMUNANAGAR'S TOWN AND PLANNING DEPARTMENT DEMOLISHES UNPAVED ROADS, DEMARCATION BLOCKS IN VYASPUR

Diary Times Desk : A team of Town and Country Planning department demolished several unpaved roads, demarcation blocks and damp proof course in an illegal colony in Vyaspur town of Yamunanagar district. The said unauthorised colony was being developed on the Vyaspur-Chhachhrauli road in Vyaspur town of Yamunanagar, which covered an area of about 2 acres.

District Town Planner (DTP) Rajesh Kumar said that the demolition action was initiated with the assistance of the district administration. "Following orders from the Deputy Commissioner Preeti, the demolition drive was carried out with the help of Duty Magistrate Sanjeev Kumar, Technical Assistant of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Department and police force," said DTP Rajesh Kumar.

"Notices were issued to the defaulters as per rules under subsection-2 of the Controlled Area Act number-12 of 1963," the DTP said. He said that the defaulters did not comply with departmental orders. He further added that the landowners did not obtain the necessary permission before establishing this illegal colony, hence the demolition drive was carried out. He appealed to the general public that no one should buy or sell plots in illegal colonies.

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

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

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

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

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

Brad Lendon

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

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

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

But the Goliaths have caught up, while – according to one report – drug cartels the world over are innovating, improving and adapting drones to fight the narco-wars of the future.
"It's like gunpowder. That's how insanely it's changed the war," Patrick Shepherd, a former US Army officer, said of the advent of cheap aerial drones.
It's invention from chaos, as myriad regional conflagrations coincide with an era of unparalleled technological advance.
It's probably just the beginning.

The evolution of drones

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

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

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

Australia's About To Find Out

What happens when you kick millions of teens off social media?

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

Hilary Whiteman

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

"It's very important to save photos," Kirra Pendergast, founder of cyber safety organization Ctrl+Shft, 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).

"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?"

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.
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.

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.

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.

MY VENICE: BIANCA ARRIVABENE, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF CHRISTIE'S ITALY

Diary Times Desk : The build-up to the Venice Biennale is my favourite time of year. Over the coming months, many of our most important clients will pass through the city. Delegations from all the different countries, as well as curators, gallerists and artists, are already in town, working on their shows. Sitting in a café, you may overhear conversations about this piece of art or that installation. You hear about which artists are coming and their plans, and your imagination starts running wild.

There are so many shows to look forward to. I can't wait to see Jenny Saville at Ca' Pesaro, Marina Abramović at Gallerie dell'Accademia, Lorna Simpson at Punta della Dogana, Michael Armitage at Palazzo Grassi and the Peggy Guggenheim show at Palazzo Venier dei Leoni — along with the Biennale itself, of course.

I was a teenager when I first visited the Biennale. I found it exhilarating, and I knew I wanted to be part of this huge organisation that involved artists from all over the world, each of them with something important to say.

Start the Biennale with a coffee at Paradiso right at the entrance of the Giardini. Get there early, before the gates open, and think about which artists you would like to see. Make the Central Pavilion your first destination of the day and take it from there.

If you sit in Harry's Bar long enough, you'll see everyone in town. All the artists, curators, collectors and celebrities pass through those doors at some point during the Biennale. Caffè Florian on Piazza San Marco is another good people-watching spot. Go there at sunset and you'll see the whole art world walk by.

The brand new kid in town is Do Farai, a lovely, tiny trattoria in the Dorsoduro neighbourhood where the food is yummy. Enjoy a drink in the Campiello dei Squelini, before or afterwards, to experience Venetian perfection.

The best focaccia comes from Dal Non Colussi bakery in Calle Lunga San Barnaba. It is a family business that was started by the grandfather in 1956 and is now run by the granddaughter, the lovely Marina. It's very special. Any waterfront café will give you a taste of Venetian life, but for a sense of the real Venice you should head to the Rialto fish market on a Saturday morning. Have a spritz at Naranzaria, just off the market square. They do great cicchetti and aperitifs.

OUR BEST KEPT SECRET IN 2025: HOW SOME 500 SPECIALISTS ACROSS 40 DEPARTMENTS DROVE $1.5 BILLION WORTH OF PRIVATE SALES

Diary Times Desk :
Adrien Meyer, global head of Private Sales, and his team at Christie's have a very particular set of skills. They probably know more than anyone else about where the world's most important works of art are kept — and can connect their owners with willing buyers behind closed doors to broker deals beyond the auction saleroom.

In 2025, he oversaw the equivalent of four transactions a day, conducted via an international network of 500 specialists spread across 40 departments, ranging from antiquities to wine, Chinese ceramics to handbags, and rare books to contemporary art. Still signing contracts on 31 December, his team made $1.5 billion worth of private sales — a quarter of Christie's total sales in 2025. The previous year, private sales were up 41 per cent: proof that if an object exists, chances are Meyer and his Private Sales team can match it with a buyer.

'My job is to hunt for works of art. But unlike auctions, where you act on behalf of the seller, private sales are more focused on the buyer,' he says. 'We get to know their tastes, patterns, needs, then find things that might interest them.'
It's a skill Meyer has acquired over the course of more than 25 years in the business. 'From the age of seven, every weekend my father would take me to the local salerooms in Paris,' he recalls. 'I was fascinated by the atmosphere and the chance of a discovery.' After studying at the Ecole du Louvre, Meyer began working in the world of auctions around 2000, joining Christie's European Furniture department four years later. In 2010, he moved to the Impressionist and Modern Art department in New York, before taking the reins of Private Sales in 2019. Despite the department's discreetness, it has existed since the very beginning. In 1779, the company's founder, James Christie, negotiated the private sale of around 200 paintings from the collection of Britain's first prime minister, Robert Walpole, to Catherine the Great for £40,500 — works that are now a key part of the Hermitage collection. Many buyers still have similar motivations today, says Meyer. A collector might approach him because they require a particular period Basquiat to fill a gap in their collection, or a Richter to hang above their mantel in time for a party at the weekend. A decorator might be urgently seeking a Roman marble to furnish a project that can't wait until the next auction season, or someone could be looking for a Birkin bag for their partner's birthday the next day. Then there are those burdened with 'underbidder regret'.

BARCELONA OPEN TO GIVING AWAY STRUGGLING FORWARD IN PLAYER PLUS CASH DEAL TO SIGN TOP ATTACKING TARGET

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona's pursuit of Julian Alvarez is gathering serious momentum, as the club grow more and more desperate to bring in a new forward this coming summer. To that end, ournalist Sique Rodriguez (h/t FCB World) has provided a fresh update on Barcelona's pursuit of Alvarez, adding that the club are already thinking about how to structure a deal.

It appears Barcelona are ready to put Ferran Torres emerging as a potential makeweight in any agreement with Atletico Madrid. It is not difficult to see why his name has come up in this context. Torres started brightly this season, racking up 13 goals in the first half of the campaign and looking every bit like the striker Barcelona had long needed him to be. But since the turn of the year, the wheels have come off rather dramatically. His last goal came on January 31 against Elche, and he has gone without a goal for almost two months since then.

BARCELONA WILL SELL TWO BIG NAMES IN THE SUMMER TO ACCOMMODATE TWO NEW SIGNINGS – REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Hansi Flick's tenure at Barcelona has largely been a success so far, and it is only now that some doubts are beginning to creep in about his project for the first time.

Yet, what he has achieved with the team so far cannot be discounted, especially when one considers that he has had little support from the club financially for signings.

The Catalans hope to change that next summer, and there is a sense of belief that the financial 1:1 rule can be reached in June pending a few operations. As confirmed by SPORT in a recent update, Deco and Hansi Flick have a relatively clear road map for the upcoming summer transfer window where there will be some big moves in terms of the squad.

There will not be many changes in the team, especially with the core, but it is speculated that two players will have to depart the club in June. The decision over Robert Lewandowski is a major one for the summer, with the club either set to part ways with the Polish striker or renewing him on significantly lower wages.

HANSI FLICK TALKS PEDRI, YAMAL, GAVI AND MORE AHEAD OF BARCELONA VS LEVANTE

Diary Times Desk : After suffering back-to-back defeats, Barcelona will be determined to get back on the winning track as they take on Levante on Sunday.

Heading into this important clash, Hansi Flick talked about Barcelona's recent struggles while offering his thoughts on the fitness levels of Pedri and Gavi, among other things. First things first, Flick was asked to comment on Barcelona's recent form, with the Catalans notably losing to Atletico Madrid and Girona.

"I'm extremely focused. The current situation and the two days of rest we got have helped us think about a lot of things. For me, this is a huge opportunity to see how far the team can go. We know that when we play with confidence, things go better," he said. The coach added that he is confident of Barcelona's chances against Levante, though he admitted it won't be an easy game for the Blaugrana. "Now we have a match on our home ground in front of our fans, and we have to fight to win all three points. It's important to score goals for more confidence, but we have to work even harder.

BARCELONA DISCUSS CONTRACT RENEWAL OF VETERAN FORWARD AMID MLS, SAUDI ARABIA OFFERS

Diary Times Desk : The future of Robert Lewandowski is something worth keeping an eye on as we approach the final couple of months of the season. From a statistical point of view, Lewandowski is enduring his worst season at Barcelona. He has struggled with injuries during the start of the season, and his physical decline has been slightly evident. However, he still remains a proactive frontman who can score at least 20 goals for the season even at the age of 37. And that is precisely why Joan Laporta is keen on extending his contract. According to Fabrizio Romano, Laporta, in a recent meeting with agent Pini Zahavi, has discussed the renewal of Lewandowski's contract, which expires at the end of the season. The relationship between Laporta and Zahavi remains excellent and the club are considering the possibility of offering Lewandowski a one-year contract extension, although it might come with a significant salary reduction.

DECO'S TOP DEFENSIVE TARGET KEEN ON A MOVE TO BARCELONA – REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona are going through a curious moment as far as their transfer market plans are concerned.

The club are clear about their desire to sign a new striker who can replace Robert Lewandowski in the years to come.

At the same time, Barcelona are also in dire need of a new centre-back. They have been linked with a move for Nico Schlotterbeck, but it seems the club are more than fine letting Real Madrid take the charge.

This is perhaps a signal that Barcelona might be eyeing a different strategy, as indicated by Diario SPORT. As per the Spanish news outlet, Deco's plans for Barcelona's defensive reinforcements don't revolve around Schlotterbeck. Instead, the Barcelona sporting director is planning a move for Alessandro Bastoni, who has been heavily linked with a move to Catalonia as well. The report adds that Barcelona are actively trying to approach the Italian international, regarded as one of the best defenders in Serie A.

LEVANTE MANAGER WARY OF WOUNDED BARCELONA AHEAD OF FACEOFF: 'NOT THE BEST TIME TO PLAY AGAINST THEM'

Diary Times Desk : Barcelona take on Levante on match day 25 of La Liga and will look to turn around their fortunes as they return to the Spotify Camp Nou after a horrendous week.

After being pulped 4-0 by Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey, the Catalans lost to Girona away from home taking a second straight defeat on their result sheet.

In the process, they handed the lead in La Liga back to Real Madrid and now must fight to stay within touching distance of Los Blancos. Speaking to the media ahead of his team's clash against Barcelona tomorrow, Levante manager Luis Castro spoke on a plethora of topics including the form of Hansi Flick's team in recent weeks.

Praising Barcelona despite their recent rut, he called them one of the best in the world and spoke on how playing them after two defeats would not be easy. "They are one of the best teams in the world. It's not the best time to play against them, because when they lose they come to the next game with maximum concentration," he began.