

NEWS IN BRIEF

**YAMUNA IN DELHI
CROSSES DANGER
MARK; FLOOD
ADVISORY ON**

Diary Times Desk : The water level of the Yamuna river in Delhi crossed the danger mark, reported news agency ANI on Monday. This comes amid all eighteen gates of Hathinikund Barrage in Haryana being opened for the first time this monsoon season. Authorities attribute the release of water from Wazirabad and Hathinikund barrages every hour to the rising water level of Yamuna in Delhi. The Yamuna River in Delhi was expected to reach 206 metres by August 19, crossing the danger mark of 205.33 metres, an advisory issued by the Central Water Commission had said on Sunday.

**SUPREME COURT'S "2-
HOUR RAIN
PARALYSES DELHI"
REMARK IN KERALA
HIGHWAY CASE**

Diary Times Desk : Heavy rain in Delhi last week caused waterlogging and chaos on the roads, once again exposing the vulnerability of the capital. The city becomes paralysed if it rains for two hours, remarked Chief Justice of India BR Gavai at a recent hearing, while a colleague commented on a Kerala instance that travellers must be compensated if they are stuck in a jam for 12 hours on a national highway. The observations were made during a recent hearing on the Paliyakkara toll plaza in Thrissur district, which was ordered by the Kerala High Court to stop collecting toll due to the poor condition of the Edappally-Mannuthy section of NH-544. The order was challenged by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

**RAIN TRIGGERS
FLASH FLOODS IN
TELANGANA,
DAMAGES ROADS
AND CROPS**

Diary Times Desk : Heavy rains triggered flash floods in parts of Telangana, inundating low-lying areas, damaging roads and crops. Rivulets, streams, lakes and ponds were overflowing due to incessant rains under the impact of low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal. With massive inflows from upstream, reservoirs were filled to the brim, prompting authorities to lift the gates to release water downstream. Heavy rains since Sunday battered united Medak district.

**INDIA -
CHINA NEWS**
**“IMPORTANT THAT DE-ESCALATION ON
BORDER CONTINUES”: S JAISHANKAR,
WANG YI MEET**


Diary Times Desk : Foreign minister S Jaishankar -- at his meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi today -- made the point that India and China would move forward with their bilateral relationship after "having seen a difficult period in our relationship" but three key concerns need to be addressed.

In his opening remarks before the meet of Special Representatives of India and China, Mr Jaishankar underscored the need to maintain peace in the border areas, ensure a "multipolar Asia" and an "exchange" of views on terrorism -- a crucial point given China's closeness to Pakistan.

"The basis for any positive momentum in our ties is the ability to jointly maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas. It is also essential that the de-escalation process move forward," Mr Jaishankar said.

"The fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is another major priority. I look forward to our exchange of views," the minister said in what was seen as a reference to the recent joint statement at SCO meet that India had refused to sign. The statement had skipped any mention of the Pahalgam terror attack of April 22 and mentioned incidents in Balochistan instead, tacitly suggesting Indian involvement. In Mr Jaishankar's opening remarks, there was also a tacit reference to the sudden imposition of 50 per cent US tariff on Indian goods. "In the current environment, there is clearly the imperative of maintaining and enhancing stability in the global economy as well," Mr Jaishankar said.

India, he added, seeks a "fair, balanced and multi-polar world order, including a multi-polar Asia. Reformulated multilateralism is also the call of the day". China's growing strong-arm tactics in southeast Asia has been a matter of concern for Indo-Pacific democracies. For years, China has been involved in territorial disputes in the resource-rich South and East China Seas - an area said to have abundant reserves of minerals, oil and other natural resources.

**‘INDIAN ON MOON IN 2040’: UNION MINISTER LAYS OUT INDIA’S
SPACE AMBITIONS**

Diary Times Desk : Union minister Jitendra Singh on Monday laid out India's space plans for the next 15 years, culminating with an Indian astronaut setting foot on the moon.

Singh was speaking in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla's mission to the International Space Station (ISS). Initiating the discussion on 'India's first astronaut aboard the International Space Station: Critical role of the space programme for Viksit Bharat by 2047', the minister said Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook space sector reforms after assuming office in 2014.

Jitendra Singh, minister of state in the PMO, said that India will undertake an uncrewed space mission involving a robot called 'Vyommitra' in 2026, followed by the country's maiden human spaceflight, Gaganyaan, in 2027. "India will set up its own Bharat Antariksh Station in 2035 and in 2040, an Indian astronaut will set foot on the moon," Singh said.

"Modi ji's dream of Viksit Bharat in 2047 will be heralded a few years in advance from the moon. An Indian on the moon will announce the heralding of Viksit Bharat," the minister claimed.

Jitendra Singh also claimed that when the government opened up the space sector for private players in 2020, India's space economy had already reached \$8 billion and would touch \$45 billion in the next decade.


**“DISAPPOINTING”: RAJNATH SINGH
AS OPPOSITION SKIPS SHUBHANSHU
SHUKLA DISCUSSION**


Diary Times Desk : Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has criticised the Opposition's conduct in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla's space odyssey, describing it as "extremely unfortunate" and "disappointing". The Defence Minister has said subjects like space must be "kept above partisan politics" and that the Opposition could have participated in the discussion and provided constructive suggestions for India's space programme.

This morning, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Parliament will honour Mr Shukla by holding a special discussion on his space journey and sought the Opposition's cooperation, urging them to set political differences aside and celebrate a national hero.

But when the House met, Opposition MPs started protesting and raising slogans against the Election Commission, disrupting the proceedings and compelling the Chair to adjourn for the day. "Today, during a special discussion in the Lok Sabha on the journey of Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla of the Indian Air Force and ISRO mission pilot to the International Space Station (ISS) and his subsequent return, the manner in which the opposition created a ruckus in the House and did not allow it to function is extremely unfortunate," the Defence Minister said on X. "This discussion was on the topic 'India's Space Program and Its Role in Viksit Bharat 2047', which is related to national achievement, the country's pride, self-respect, and the prospects of scientific and national security in the future.

**PUTIN BRIEFS PM MODI ON TRUMP MEET
AFTER TARIFFS ON INDIA OVER RUSSIAN OIL**


Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi has thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for calling him up and sharing the insights on his recent meeting with US President Donald Trump at Alaska.

"Thank my friend, President Putin, for his phone call and for sharing insights on his recent meeting with President Trump in Alaska," tweeted PM Modi. He also said that India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard. "India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard. I look forward to our continued exchanges in the days to come," he added.

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Alaska on August 15 to discuss a ceasefire over the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. The meeting holds significance as it comes after the US President imposed 25 per cent tariffs on select Indian goods and a penalty of another 25 per cent for buying Russian oil. Trump alleged that India is funding Russia's war with Ukraine by buying cheap Russian oil. India had on Saturday welcomed the Alaska meeting between Russian President Donald Trump and US President Vladimir Putin, calling their leadership "highly commendable" in the pursuit of peace.

"India welcomes the Summit meeting in Alaska between US President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. Their leadership in the pursuit of peace is highly commendable," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement. "India appreciates the progress made in the Summit. The way forward can only be through dialogue and diplomacy.

INDIA - USA NEWS
**SPARE CHINA BUT HIT INDIA:
US SECRETARY OF STATE
DEFENDS RUSSIAN OIL
HYPOCRISY**


Diary Times Desk : US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has acknowledged that imposing secondary sanctions on China for refining Russian oil could drive up global energy prices, even as Washington has punished India with additional tariffs for continuing to purchase crude from Moscow.

Speaking to Fox News on August 17, Rubio cautioned that targeting Chinese refiners would have disruptive consequences for the global oil market.

"If you impose secondary sanctions on a country, as in the case of Russian oil shipments to China, China will simply refine that oil and it will return to the global market. Anyone buying this oil will pay a higher price, or if it is unavailable, they will have to look for alternative sources," he said.

Rubio revealed that European nations have already expressed unease over such measures. "When we discussed the Senate bill proposing a 100 percent tariff on China and India, we heard from a number of European countries that they were unhappy with that possibility," he added.

His comments came after he had earlier stressed that India's energy trade with Moscow has long been a sore spot in Washington. Speaking to Fox Radio, Rubio said India's continued purchases of Russian oil were "helping to sustain the Russian war effort in Ukraine" and were "most certainly a point of irritation" in New Delhi's relationship with the United States, though not the only one. "India has huge energy needs and that includes the ability to buy oil and coal and gas and things that it needs to power its economy like every country does, and it buys it from Russia, because Russian oil is sanctioned.

**MONSOON FURY LEAVES 263
DEAD IN HIMACHAL PRADESH;
LOSSES PEGGED AT ₹2,173
CRORE**


Diary Times Desk : The ongoing monsoon has wreaked widespread havoc across Himachal Pradesh, claiming 263 lives since June 20, according to the Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (HPSDMA).

Of the total fatalities, 136 were caused by rain-related incidents such as landslides, flash floods, cloudbursts, drowning, and electrocution. At the same time, 127 people lost their lives in separate road accidents, the report stated.

The torrential rains have also left a massive trail of destruction across the hill state. As per the cumulative report, more than 31,000 houses, shops, labour huts, cow sheds, and other structures have been damaged, including both fully and partially collapsed dwellings. On the infrastructure front, damage has been severe. 2,201 roads remain disrupted, hampering connectivity. 2,550 drinking water supply schemes have been hit, while 1,145 power supply lines are down, plunging several areas into darkness. In addition, public property losses have been estimated at a staggering ₹2,173 crore.

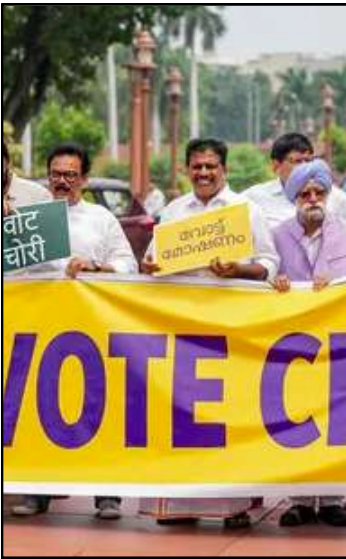
'REFUSED TO ANSWER HARD QUESTIONS': OPPOSITION HITS OUT AT EC IN JOINT STATEMENT

Diary Times Desk : Opposition parties on Monday issued a joint statement regarding the Election Commission (EC) press conference, saying that the apex poll body has "completely failed in discharging its constitutional duties."

Apart from Congress, other parties that were a part of this joint statement are the Samajwadi Party, TMC, Shiv Sena (UBT), DMK, NCP (SCP), RJD, Aam Aadmi Party, JMM, CPI, CPI(M), CPI(ML), IUML, National Conference, and others.

The statement alleged that Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar "refused to answer any hard questions" in his press conference on Sunday.

"The CEC offered no clarification or comment on the allegations made by Shri Rahul Gandhi ji, Leader of Opposition, on the voter fraud unearthed in Mahadevapura, except to reiterate his legally infirm demand for the data to be placed on affidavit. Furthermore, the CEC refused to answer any hard questions with regard to why no inquiry or investigation had taken place on the allegations of voter fraud," the statement said.



CHINA'S WANG YI'S 1ST INDIA VISIT IN 3 YEARS, 'ELEPHANT', 'DRAGON' TO DANCE?

Diary Times Desk : China Foreign Minister Wang Yi met his counterpart S Jaishankar in Delhi Monday evening and will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi later, hinting at a potential reset of fractured ties between two of the world's largest economies as they navigate being bashed by US President Donald Trump's trade tariffs.

Mr Yi's visit signals the resumption of top-level Delhi-Beijing contact - this is his first visit to India in three years - a resumption to be cemented by the Prime Minister's trip August 31-September 1 trip to China's Tainjin for another meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Wang Yi's visit to India and the PM's China trip are significant from a border and regional security standpoint. Any peaceful resolution to long-standing disputes in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, and any step towards a less geopolitically volatile Eurasia, will be widely welcomed.

The Chinese minister's visit is expected to help restart not just frozen border dispute resolution mechanisms, but also more important people-to-people contact like visas and direct flights stopped in the early days of the Covid pandemic and kept on hold after the violence in Ladakh.

DMK MP OPPOSITION'S FAVOURITE FOR VEEP POLLS, BUT TRINAMOOL HAS A PROBLEM

Diary Times Desk : The Opposition INDIA bloc is likely to pick the DMK's Rajya Sabha MP Tiruchi Siva as its Vice-Presidential candidate, in a strategic move that would pit the senior Tamil Nadu politician against another from his state in the upcoming election and overcome the key hurdle posed by regional politics, said sources. The official nominee will be known only after Opposition parties meet this evening at Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's house to decide on their candidate.

Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan, one of the BJP's tallest leaders in Tamil Nadu, is the NDA's candidate for the September 9 election, the central ruling party had announced last evening.

The untimely Vice-Presidential election follows the sudden resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar, officially over health concerns, though sources had later pointed out differences with the BJP that ought to have forced the senior Jat leader to an early exit.

Choosing Mr Siva as its candidate could help the Opposition navigate the intricacies of regional politics, the sources indicated, highlighting several factors that may go in favour of the Tamil Nadu politician.

However, it may lead to a fallout with the Trinamool Congress, a key component of the INDIA bloc. Sources within the Mamata Banerjee-led party had earlier suggested that a non-political figure be projected for the Vice-Presidential election, insisting on building a consensus unlike last time. The Trinamool had abstained from voting in the last Vice Presidential election, disagreeing with the Opposition's choice of Congress leader Margaret Alva. Mr Dhankhar had won that election.

SHUBHANSHU SHUKLA SHOWS PICS OF EARTH FROM SPACE DURING MEET WITH PM MODI

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla this evening, a day after the astronaut returned to India after his historic visit to the International Space Station (ISS). PM Modi hosted Mr Shukla at the Prime Minister's residence in Delhi. PM Modi was seen welcoming Mr Shukla, who was wearing an ISRO astronaut's jacket, with a hug. He gifted the Axiom-4 mission patch to PM Modi and showed him pictures of the Earth taken from the International Space Station. He is the first Indian astronaut to travel to the International Space Station (ISS).

"India is proud of his feat," posted PM Modi on X after the meeting.

Mr Shukla was part of the Axiom-4 private space mission, which lifted off from Florida on June 25 and docked at the ISS on June 26. He returned to Earth on July 15.

During the 18-day mission, Mr Shukla, along with astronauts Peggy Whitson (US).

YOUR HOROSCOPE

19-08-2025

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

MK STALIN'S 7 QUESTIONS AFTER POLL BODY CHIEF DEFENDS BIHAR POLL ROLL REVISION

Diary Times Desk : Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president MK Stalin on Monday intensified his attack on the Election Commission of India (ECI), accusing it of "voter theft" through mass deletions under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process in Bihar. He said the Chief Election Commissioner's (CEC) recent press conference had "raised more doubts than answers" to the concerns flagged by the INDIA bloc. The remarks came a day after CEC Gyanesh Kumar defended the SIR process, stressing it was transparent and legally mandated. "When more than seven crore voters of Bihar are standing with the Election Commission, then neither can any question mark be raised on its credibility nor the credibility of the voters," he said in New Delhi. Mr Kumar dismissed allegations of double voting and "vote chori" as baseless, noting that booth-level officers, parties and voters themselves had verified and signed the documents. He urged political parties to point out errors before the September 1 deadline instead of raising objections later, and warned Rahul Gandhi to submit an affidavit within seven days to substantiate his allegations.

SUPREME COURT INITIATES SUO MOTU CASE ON STRUGGLES FACED BY CADETS WHO SUFFER DISABILITY DURING MILITARY TRAINING

Diary Times Desk : A 39-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly raping his 65-year-old mother twice, claiming he was punishing her for an alleged relationship she had in the past. According to police, the woman, accompanied by her 25-year-old daughter, approached the Hauz Qazi police station and lodged a complaint. The assaults took place shortly after the family returned from a religious trip to Saudi Arabia. As per the complaint, the woman lives with her husband, a retired government employee, her accused son, and younger daughter in Delhi's Hauz Qazi area. The family also has an elder daughter who is married and lives nearby with her in-laws. On July 17, the woman, her husband, and younger daughter travelled to Saudi Arabia. During their trip, the accused called his father and insisted he return to Delhi immediately. He also asked his father to divorce his mother, and accused her of having had illicit relationships during his childhood. The complaint stated that after the family returned to Delhi on August 1.

CARS, MOBILE PHONES, COMPUTERS. WHAT MAY GET CHEAPER IN NEW GST SYSTEM

Diary Times Desk : An overhaul of the Goods and Services Tax, or GST, framework - hailed as "next-generation" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech last week - is expected to slash prices of daily-use items by rationalising and reducing the number of brackets under which various goods are taxed.

The revision is also expected to lower taxes on passenger vehicles and two-wheelers.

Sources told NDTV last week five per cent and 18 per cent brackets have been proposed, and goods earlier taxed under others, i.e., 12 and 28 per cent, will now be shifted to one of these.

Specifically, sources said the government plans to cut tax on 90 per cent of all goods currently attracting 28 per cent GST and drop these products into the 18 per cent bracket. A similarly large chunk of goods now taxed at 12 per cent will face reduced levies - five per cent only. The five per cent bracket will include 'daily-use' items, the government had said.

In addition, there will be a special 'sin tax' of 40 per cent on certain items, including tobacco products. There will be only five to seven goods in this list, sources said.

These already attract higher levies. Chewing tobacco, for example, faces a 160 per cent cess and cigarettes are taxed through a mix of GST, cess and National Calamity Contingent Duty.

DEATH TOLL IN HYDERABAD RATH YATRA TRAGEDY RISES TO SIX



Diary Times Desk : The death toll due to electrocution during the Sri Krishna Shobha Yatra in Hyderabad rose to six with one of the injured succumbing at a hospital on Monday. The incident occurred at Gokulnagar in Ramanthapur, past midnight, when the Rath came into contact with an electric wire. The yatra was being taken as part of the Sri Krishna Janmashtami celebrations.

PM MODI SETS BALL ROLLING ON NEXT-GEN REFORMS WITH HIGH-LEVEL MEETING

Diary Times Desk : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday chaired a meeting with top ministers, secretaries and economists to discuss the roadmap for next-generation reforms.

Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Nirmala Sitharaman, and Piyush Goyal, among others, were present at the high-level meeting.

In a post on X after the meeting, the Prime Minister said that his government is committed to speedy reforms across all sectors, which will boost Ease of Living, Ease of Doing Business and prosperity.

"Chaired a meeting to discuss the roadmap for Next-Generation Reforms. We are committed to speedy reforms across all sectors, which will boost Ease of Living, Ease of Doing Business and prosperity," PM Modi wrote.

In his Independence Day speech, PM Modi announced the formation of a Task Force for Next-Generation Economic Reforms, aimed at overhauling laws, rules, and procedures that govern economic activity.

PUTIN DIALS PM MODI: INDIA CALLS FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF UKRAINE WAR AS TRUMP MEETS ZELENSKY

Diary Times Desk : Russian President Vladimir Putin called Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, just days after he met US President Donald Trump, and hours before Trump was to meet Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in ongoing efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war.

In the call, PM Modi reiterated India's stance on the Ukraine war and called for a peaceful resolution.

"Thank my friend, President Putin, for his phone call and for sharing insights on his recent meeting with President Trump in Alaska. India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard. I look forward to our continued exchanges in the days to come," PM Modi wrote on X. As per the handout, the two leaders also discussed a number of issues of bilateral cooperation. The two leaders agreed to remain in close touch. During their call, Russian President Putin also shared his assessment of his recent meeting with US President Trump in Alaska.

BENGALURU BRACES FOR WEEK-LONG RAIN AS IMD ISSUES RED ALERT FOR PARTS OF KARNATAKA

Diary Times Desk : The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for multiple districts in Karnataka, forecasting "very heavy to extremely heavy rain" on August 18 and 19.

The highest-level weather warning is in place for Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Shivamogga, Chikmagalur, and Uttara Kannada districts. Meanwhile, an orange alert has been issued for Belagavi and Haveri.

Bengaluru Urban and Rural, along with Ballari, are expected to receive moderate yet consistent rainfall, accompanied by strong winds. For the state capital, IMD has predicted a continuous spell of rain lasting through August 23, raising concerns about further waterlogging and disruption to daily life.

Already grappling with flooding in several neighbourhoods, Bengaluru could see worsening conditions if the wet weather continues. Authorities have warned of possible traffic delays and interruptions to civic services.

The current surge in rainfall is attributed to a low-pressure area that has formed over the Bay of Bengal near the Andhra Pradesh-Odisha coast. IMD noted that this system is likely to intensify and move inland by August 19, drawing moisture-laden winds across Karnataka.

An active monsoon trough stretching across central India, along with a cyclonic circulation over the northeast Arabian Sea, is also fuelling widespread rainfall in the state.

HONG KONG COURT BEGINS HEARING FINAL ARGUMENTS IN JIMMY LAI'S NATIONAL SECURITY TRIAL



Diary Times Desk : A Hong Kong court heard final arguments Monday in the landmark national security trial of former pro-democracy newspaper founder Jimmy Lai, who could be sentenced to up to life in prison if he is convicted.

Lai, 77, was arrested in 2020 under a national security law imposed by Beijing following anti-government protests in 2019. He is being tried on charges of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to issue seditious publications. Lai founded Apple Daily, one of the local media outlets that was most critical of Hong Kong's government. His high-profile case that has stretched nearly 150 days, almost double the original estimate, is widely seen as a trial of press freedom and a test for judicial independence in the Asian financial hub.

It is unclear when a verdict will be delivered. Prosecutor Anthony Chau said on Monday that Lai was arrested for collusion in August 2020, but he continued to make requests for sanctions, blockades or other hostile activities in the following months.

Chau suggested that the appeals for foreign actions did not only target individuals, but also China, while the foreign collaborations Lai had were long-term and persistent. Chau cited Lai's foreign connections to show what he called Lai's "unwavering intent" to solicit foreign actions. A prosecution document shown in court argued that the law doesn't prohibit normal international exchanges. But how Lai attempted to draw an analogy of what he did to the cooperation between Hong Kong's prosecuting authority and the International Association of Prosecutors was bewildering.

CHINA HANDS OVER THIRD HANGOR-CLASS SUBMARINE TO PAKISTAN

Diary Times Desk : China has delivered the third of the eight new "advanced" Hangor-class submarines to Pakistan as part of Beijing's efforts to upgrade Islamabad's naval strength to support its growing presence in the Indian Ocean, India's backyard.

The launching ceremony of the third Hangor-class submarine was held in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province, on Thursday, the state-run Global Times reported on Saturday.

The second of the eight submarines China is building for Pakistan was handed over in March this year.

This is in addition to four modern naval frigates that China supplied to Pakistan in the last few years as part of its efforts to boost Pakistan's naval strength amid the Chinese navy's steady expansion in the Arabian Sea, where it is developing the Gwadar port in Balochistan, as well as in the Indian Ocean.

Speaking at the launch of the third submarine, Pakistan's Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Project-2 Vice Admiral Abdul Samad said the Hangor-class submarine's cutting-edge weaponry and advanced sensors would be instrumental in sustaining regional power equilibrium and ensuring maritime stability, the daily quoted a Pakistan defence statement as saying.

According to a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China supplied over 81 per cent of Pakistan's military hardware.

Some of Pakistan's key orders in the past five years include the country's first spy ship, the Rizwan; more than 600 VT-4 battle tanks, and 36 J-10CE 4.5-generation fighters, according to the SIPRI database.

WHY US UPGRADED BALOCHISTAN LIBERATION ARMY'S TERROR DESIGNATION



Diary Times Desk : US systemic rivalry with China over the contours of the emerging world order has made many assume that it backs all opponents of the People's Republic, from neighboring states with whom Beijing has territorial disputes to terrorist groups, yet a recent move just shattered this perception.

The US State Department abruptly raised the Balochistan Liberation Army's (BLA) 2019 "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" designation to a "Foreign Terrorist Organization" amid the US-Pakistani rapprochement.

The BLA is veritably a terrorist group whose last well-known attack was its deadly hijacking of the Jaffar Express earlier this spring, which followed an upsurge of other terrorist attacks over the past three years, including against projects connected to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

CPEC is a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and was envisaged as giving China direct access to the Indian Ocean for preemptively mitigating the effects of any future US blockade of the Malacca Strait.

TAIWAN 'ISSUE' AN INTERNAL MATTER, CHINA SAYS IN RESPONSE TO TRUMP

Diary Times Desk : Taiwan is an internal matter for China, Beijing's foreign ministry said on Monday, in response to US President Donald Trump saying Chinese President Xi Jinping told him he will not invade the island while Trump is in office.

Trump made the comments in an interview with Fox News, ahead of talks in Alaska with Russian President Vladimir Putin over Moscow's war with Ukraine.

Asked about Trump's remarks at a daily news briefing in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory.

"The Taiwan issue is purely an internal affair of China, and how to resolve the Taiwan issue is a matter for the Chinese people," she said.

"We will do our utmost to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification."

UKRAINE'S DEFENSE FORCES HIT OIL PUMPING STATION OF DRUZHBA PIPELINE IN RUSSIA'S TAMBOV REGION

Diary Times Desk : On the night of August 18th, units of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces, working with other units of the Defense Forces, struck the Nikolskoye-1 oil pumping station in Russia's Tambov region, the General Staff reported.

"As a result of the strike, a fire broke out at the facility. Oil pumping through the Druzhba main pipeline has been completely halted," the department said.

The shutdown was also confirmed by Hungary's Foreign Minister Péter Szijártó on Facebook.

He condemned the attack, saying it had forced a suspension of oil supplies to Hungary.

"Another attack on our energy security is outrageous and unacceptable," Szijártó said. He added that Russian Deputy Energy Minister Pavel Sorokin had reported about specialists attempting to restore the transformer station critical to the pipeline's operation, but no timeline for resuming supplies was available.

The damage was confirmed by NASA's Firms fire monitoring service, which recorded several fire sites around 2 a.m. local time.

The Nikolskoye-1 station is located near Sestrenka-Kugushevo, about 400 kilometers from the front line. It is a key facility on the 5,500-kilometer Druzhba pipeline, responsible for supplying oil products to Tambov and neighboring regions in central Russia.

INDIA, CHINA TO DISCUSS BORDER PEACE AHEAD OF WANG YI'S VISIT

Diary Times Desk :

China's foreign ministry spokesperson on Monday said Beijing is ready to work with India to "sustain lasting peace and tranquillity in the border areas". Mao Ning, a spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry, made the remarks in China just a day ahead of the meeting of Special Representatives (SR) of the two countries on the boundary question. The meeting is in New Delhi on Tuesday. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is SR for his country, will meet National Security Advisor Ajit Doval for what would be the 24th round of SR talks.

At a regular press briefing in Beijing, Mao was asked about the forthcoming talks, and China's state-run mouthpiece Global Times quoted Mao's response: "Regarding this upcoming meeting."

14 KILLED IN RUSSIAN ATTACK ON UKRAINE AHEAD OF TRUMP-ZELENSKY TALKS

Diary Times Desk : Russian attacks, including on an apartment block in Kharkiv city, killed 14 people across Ukraine, authorities said Monday, ahead of talks in Washington between President Volodymyr Zelensky and US leader Donald Trump.

The early-morning drone attack on Kharkiv reduced part of a five-storey residential building to rubble and sparked fires on at least three floors, governor Oleg Synegebov said on Telegram.

The emergency services posted videos showing rescuers trying to break through rubble to free a trapped resident.

"Seven civilians, including two children, have been killed in the attack," Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said on social media, adding that 23 people were wounded.

The city near the Russian border was also hit hours earlier by a ballistic missile that wounded at least 11 people, Mayor Igor Terekhov said.

Klymenko said another three people were killed and 23 wounded in a strike on the Zaporizhzhia region.



ZELENSKY RETURNS TO SITE OF STUNNING OVAL OFFICE SHOUTING MATCH TO MEET TRUMP

Diary Times Desk : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky returns to the Oval Office on Monday for the first time since a spectacularly tense exchange with President Donald Trump saw their talks cut short and question marks raised over future US support.

At the February 28 meeting, President Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated Zelensky on live television, accusing him of being ungrateful for US aid provided since Russia's invasion three years prior, and pressing for quick negotiations to end the war.

The hostile confrontation marked a turning point in Kyiv-Washington relations, which had been warm under former president Joe Biden, and raised fears that President Trump would cut off US military support.

The scene quickly devolved at the end of a long question-and-answer session with the press.

Vice President Vance accused President Zelensky of being "disrespectful" and displaying ingratitude for President Trump's diplomatic efforts, after the Ukrainian leader expressed skepticism that Russian President Vladimir Putin could be trusted, given his repeated violations of earlier agreements.

INDIAN TRUCK DRIVER'S FATAL U-TURN SPARKS TEAM TRUMP VS CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR

Diary Times Desk : The violent crash in Florida, which killed three people, has become the latest flashpoint between the Donald Trump administration and California Governor Gavin Newsom.

A semi-truck driver, an illegal immigrant, attempted an illegal U-turn on the Florida turnpike, resulting in the trailer jackknifing and colliding with a minivan.

It turns out the Sikh man, identified as Harjinder Singh from India, was issued a commercial driver's license by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), despite his illegal status. The finding gave ammunition to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which posted on X, "How many more innocent people have to die before Gavin Newsom stops playing games with the safety of the American public?"

DHS is working around the clock to protect the public and get these criminal illegal aliens out of America, it said.

However, Mr Newsom's Press office claimed that when Mr Singh entered the US, Mr Trump was the president.

Under California's law, one gets a commercial driver's license only when they have a lawful presence in the country, his office said.

'SKIBIDI' AND 'TRADWIFE' AMONG WORDS ADDED TO CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY

Diary Times Desk : "Skibidi", "tradwife" and other slang terms popularised on social media are among thousands of new words to be added to the Cambridge Dictionary this year.

Skibidi is a gibberish term which gained popularity via a viral animated video series on YouTube, while tradwife is a shortening of "traditional wife" – a married mother who cooks, cleans and posts on social media.

More than 6,000 new words have been added, including those that relate to tech giants and remote working.

"Internet culture is changing the English language and the effect is fascinating to observe and capture in the dictionary," said lexical programme manager Colin McIntosh.

Skibidi is defined in the dictionary as "a word that can have different meanings such as 'cool' or 'bad', or can be used with no real meaning as a joke". An example of its use is "What the skibidi are you doing?"

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian revealed her familiarity with the phrase when she posted a video on Instagram showing a necklace engraved with "skibidi toilet" – the name of the YouTube series.

An earlier use of the word came in 2018 when the band Little Big released a track called Skibidi. The music video has been viewed more than 700 million times and features a dance that went viral.



PUTIN'S BODYGUARDS CARRIED 'POOP SUITCASE' TO ALASKA SUMMIT. HERE'S WHY



Diary Times Desk : Russian President Vladimir Putin's bodyguards reportedly carried a "poop suitcase" to collect his faecal waste during the Friday Alaska summit with US President Donald Trump, as reported by The Express US.

The unusual security measure was said to be aimed at preventing foreign powers from obtaining information about the Russian leader's health. "Putin's bodyguards collect his faecal waste and bring it back to Russia when the leader travels abroad," The Express US reported.

During Putin's meeting, strict security measures were in place to protect Putin.

POLLS CLOSE IN BOLIVIA AS 20 YEARS OF LEFTIST RULE EXPECTED TO END

Diary Times Desk : Polls have closed in Bolivia's presidential and general elections, with the governing socialists expected to lose power after almost 20 years due to a deep economic crisis and division within the leftist coalition.

Ballot stations shut at 4pm (20:00 GMT) on Sunday, with initial results expected after 9pm (01:00 GMT on Monday).

The election is the first time in almost two decades that polling indicates Bolivia's incumbent Movement for Socialism (MAS) could face defeat. MAS-affiliated and other left-leaning candidates trail the right-wing opposition by about 10 percent, according to the latest Ipsos survey done in August.

Eight presidential candidates are in the running – from the far-right to the political left. But two candidates appear to have a comfortable lead: Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, who served as interim president and vice president under former military ruler Hugo Banzer, and Samuel Doria Medina, a wealthy businessman and former planning minister.

Medina, 66, and Quiroga, 65, are neck and neck, according to the polling survey.

Former leftist President Evo Morales has been barred from running, and the outgoing socialist President Luis Arce, who had fallen out with Morales, opted out of the race.

**ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ZELENSKY'S UPCOMING MEETING WITH TRUMP
IN US**

Diary Times Desk : US President Donald Trump is set to host Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders at the White House on Monday to discuss how to end Russia's three-year war in Ukraine.

Months of US-led diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting haven't made headway, but the stakes have risen since Trump met with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday. After that summit, Trump abandoned the requirement of reaching a ceasefire in order to hold further talks and aligned with Putin's position that negotiations should focus on a long-term settlement instead.

The presence of several European leaders at the talks in Washington shows how central the conflict - and any settlement - is to wider security questions on the continent.

They are looking to safeguard Ukraine and Europe more broadly from any further aggression from Moscow - but also are providing a show of support for Zelenskyy after his last visit to the White House led to an angry confrontation. The American and Ukrainian leaders are scheduled to first meet privately, without the Europeans.

**THE INDUSTRIAL HEARTLAND IN UKRAINE
THAT IS KEY TO PEACE DEAL WITH PUTIN**

Diary Times Desk : The worst fears of Europe and Ukraine could become a reality this evening. Surrendering Ukrainian land to Russia had never been acceptable to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but that's exactly the offer he will reportedly receive when he meets US President Donald Trump, which could bring an end to the three-year-long war in Ukraine.

The Russian-speaking Donbas in Ukraine has long been coveted by Russian President Vladimir Putin, and according to him, it has been the "root cause" of their invasion. Seizing control of this eastern industrial heartland of Ukraine - comprising Donetsk and Lugansk - tops his territorial demand.

Trump backs this demand, reports The New York Times, as the US President remains in a hurry to flout to the world his peace-making skills. Zelenskyy, however, has been firm. He had warned that Putin could base his future invasions on this region, but asserted he would "never leave" Donbas.

**US CLAIMS IT KEEPS AN EYE ON INDIA,
PAKISTAN "EVERY SINGLE DAY".****HERE'S WHY**

Diary Times Desk : The United States monitors the India-Pakistan situation "every single day", said US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday, reiterating claims by American President Donald Trump of having helped in averting a nuclear escalation between two Asian neighbours. Speaking to NBC News, Rubio said truce deals can fall apart quickly as maintaining them is a challenge.

India has maintained that the military conflict with Pakistan ended in May through a ceasefire sought by Islamabad after suffering heavy damage. Pakistan, however, echoed Trump's claim, giving the US leader credit for gaining his attention. "One of the complications of ceasefires is maintaining them, which is very difficult. Every single day, we are keeping an eye on what is happening between Pakistan and India," Rubio said.

**"MUST BE PREPARED AT EVERY
MOMENT FOR
CONFRONTATION.": IRAN ON
CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL**

Diary Times Desk : A senior Iranian official warned Monday that war with Israel could erupt at any moment, describing the current lull after June's 12-day conflict as only a temporary halt.

"We must be prepared at every moment for confrontation; right now, we are not even in a ceasefire (agreement); we are in a cessation of hostilities," said First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref.

The fighting in June saw Israel bombard Iranian nuclear and military sites, as well as residential areas, killing more than 1,000 people, including senior commanders and nuclear scientists.

Iran retaliated with missile and drone strikes that killed dozens in Israel.

**ZELENSKY'S PRAISE FOR
TRUMP AHEAD OF MEET: US
HAS 'STRENGTH' TO FORCE
RUSSIA INTO PEACE**

Diary Times Desk : Ahead of his highly anticipated meeting with President Donald Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy took to X to claim that only the United States has the "strength to force Russia into peace".

"Russia can only be forced into peace through strength, and President Trump has that strength. We have to do everything right to make peace happen," wrote Zelenskyy.

Zelenskyy's praise for Trump comes in a message he shared on social media, thanking Keith Kellogg, US special envoy to Ukraine after a joint meeting with European leaders.

"When peace is discussed for one country in Europe, it means peace for all of Europe. We are ready to continue working with maximum effort to end the war and to ensure reliable security. These are the key issues," said Zelenskyy.

"Last night, Russian attacks on our cities continued - among those killed were two children, and dozens of people were wounded. People were simply sleeping when the Russian army launched strikes on the cities. We discussed the battlefield situation and our strong diplomatic capabilities - Ukraine's and all of Europe's together with America," the Ukrainian president added further.

**WAR-TORN MYANMAR TO HOLD FIRST GENERAL ELECTION SINCE
2021 COUP**

Diary Times Desk : Myanmar will begin its general elections on 28 December, its military government announced, in a phased poll widely condemned as a sham that will be used to entrench the junta's power.

This will be the first vote since the junta seized power in a bloody coup in 2021, and imprisoned democratically elected leader Aung San Sung Kyi.

Myanmar has been embroiled in a civil war since, with deadly battles between the military and ethnic armed groups, many of whom have said they would not permit voting in their areas. Previous plans to hold an election were repeatedly delayed as the military has struggled to contain an opposition insurgency which has gained control over much of the country.

Some 55 parties have registered for the polls, state media said Monday, adding that nine of them plan to compete for seats nationwide.

"The first phase of the multi-party democratic general election for each parliament will begin on Sunday, 28 December 2025," Myanmar's election commission said in a statement.

"Dates for the subsequent phases will be announced later."

With large parts of Myanmar under opposition control and in a state of war, holding this election is a formidable logistical exercise for the country's military rulers.

But the junta's leader Min Aung Hlaing, who led the catastrophic coup four and a half years ago, has said the vote must go ahead, and has threatened severe punishment for anyone who criticises or obstructs the election.



PUNJAB CABINET SHUFFLE: SANJEEV ARORA GETS POWER DEPT,
HARBHAJAN ETO LEFT WITH PWD

Diary Times Desk : Harbhajan Singh ETO has lost the Power department to Sanjeev Arora, a new entrant in the Bhagwant Mann-led Punjab Cabinet. ETO will now have only the Public Works department. Arora, who was sworn in as a minister in Punjab Cabinet last month, has been empowered by getting another portfolio. He already has the Industry and Commerce, Investment Promotion, and NRI Affairs departments. The notification regarding the re-allocation of portfolios was issued late this evening. The Punjab Governor, on the advice of CM Mann, has changed the portfolios of the two ministers. For the past few months, there were murmurs in the corridors of power regarding impending changes in the portfolios of ministers. Even when Arora, who left his Rajya Sabha seat to contest and win the Ludhiana West byelection, was sworn in as a minister in July, the re-allocation of portfolios was expected. However, other than inducting him into the cabinet and removing Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal, no other changes were made then.



AMRITSAR POLICE BOOK CASE
OVER AI-MORPHED VIDEO OF
GOLDEN TEMPLE



Diary Times Desk : Following a complaint lodged by the Golden Temple management, the Amritsar police have registered an FIR against an unknown person for hurting Sikh sentiments by morphing videos of Darbar Sahib. In the complaint, lodged by Bhagwant Singh Dhangera, General Manager of Golden Temple, it was alleged that a miscreant with a social media page 'Good Farmers' had uploaded morphed videos of Darbar Sahib using an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool, showing it collapsing in floodwaters. The complaint was submitted on August 13, and the police registered an FIR with the Cybercrime cell on August 14.

Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar has confirmed the registration of the FIR, adding that investigations are in progress to identify the miscreants behind uploading the AI-morphed video. Dhangera pointed out that the video was shared and viewed by people thousands of times, causing huge resentment among the Sikh community. He termed the incident unfortunate, adding that the AI technique has been repeatedly used in the recent past to tamper with pictures of the Sikh Gurus also. He urged the Police Commissioner to take stringent measures so that nobody could misuse AI technology in the future to hurt Sikh sentiments.

COUNTRY ROADS OF PUNJAB POOR
COUSINS OF STATE HIGHWAYS

Diary Times Desk : Country roads in Punjab continue to be the poor cousins of highways in the state, with commuters facing harrowing times during their daily travel across the state. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced in his Independence Day speech at Faridkot that the state had approved a budget for work on 19,000 km of roads in rural areas after the monsoons. But in the context of the Centre recently scrapping Rs 800 crore worth of road projects in rural Punjab, along with the Centre withholding grants worth more than Rs 9,000 crore under Rural Development Fund (RDF), analysts say the target may be difficult to reach. The figures are important in the context that a bulk of the RDF was spent on repairing and maintaining roads in rural areas. The situation arose after the central government proposed reducing RDF to a maximum of 2 per cent of MSP against the earlier rate of 3 per cent. More than 5,000 km of rural roads are unfit for normal travel or badly damaged. People are pleading for at least the potholes to be filled.

ANDAMAN DGP HARGOBINDER SINGH
DHALIWAL TO BE HONOURED WITH
PRESIDENT'S MEDAL

Diary Times Desk : The Ministry of Home Affairs has announced President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service to be awarded to Hargobinder Singh Dhaliwal, the Director General of Police (DGP) of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, on the occasion of India's 79th Independence Day.

He belongs to Patiala and is an alumnus of Punjab Public School, Nabha, and Panjab University, Chandigarh. He has completed his degrees of MBA and LLB before joining IPS.

A 1997-batch IPS officer of the AGMUT cadre, Dhaliwal has earned a reputation for his sharp investigative skills and leadership in high-profile criminal cases. His most notable contribution in recent years was his pivotal role in the investigation of the Sidhu Moosewala murder case, which drew national and international attention.

As the head of the Delhi Police Special Cell at the time, Dhaliwal led the operation that resulted in the arrest of three key shooters involved in Moosewala's killing. His team apprehended Priyavrat Fauji, Ankit Sersa and Kashish, and coordinated with other agencies to track down Deepak Mundi, who was later arrested near the Nepal border.

FARMERS, CONGRESS
FORCED AAP GOVT TO
WITHDRAW LAND
POOLING INITIATIVE:
PUNJAB CONGRESS CHIEF
RAJA WARRING

Diary Times Desk : Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring on Sunday accused the BJP of "trying to steal" the credit for the withdrawal of the land pooling policy, saying it was farmers and his party that forced the AAP government to roll back the initiative. He said it was the Congress and state farmers who put up a strong resistance against the policy with massive protests. "It is farmers and the Congress workers who deserve the credit. The BJP is trying to steal it," he said asking the BJP leadership to spell out its contribution to making the government withdraw the policy. The state Congress president also accused the BJP of "playing a fixed match with ruling AAP", which he said was "trying to help it in making inroads into Punjab".

HIGH COURT QUASHES
PUNJAB'S BLANKET BAN ON
HYBRID PADDY SEEDS



Diary Times Desk : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has set aside Punjab's April 7 order imposing a blanket ban on the use of notified hybrid paddy seeds in the State after holding that it did not withstand the test of legality. The Bench clarified that the State could not prohibit the use of varieties duly notified by the Government of India under the Seeds Act of 1966. It, as such, upheld the administrative orders of April 4 and April 10, 2019, which had restricted only the use of non-notified hybrid seeds, while permitting the notified varieties.

Justice Kuldeep Tiwari ruled that the administrative order dated April 4, 2019, partially modified vide administrative order dated April 10, 2019, imposing prohibition only on use non-notified varieties of hybrid paddy in the State, while allowing varieties notified by the Government of India under the Seeds Act of 1966 passed the test of legality. The Bench added that the administrative order dated April 7, prohibiting the use of notified varieties of hybrid paddy seeds in the State, did not pass the test of legality. Therefore, the impugned administrative order dated April 7 was set aside.

SHIMLA-MANDI ROAD
SINKS AT SUNNI;
VEHICULAR MOVEMENT
DISRUPTED



Diary Times Desk : Traffic movement on the Shimla-Mandi road at Sunni in Shimla district has been disrupted after the road was severely damaged after a significant portion of the road sank into the Satluj river. As a result, the road width has been reduced to 1.5 metres.

According to the district administration, the road has been severely affected due to scouring caused by the water current of the Satluj, making it unsafe for vehicular movement. The district administration has closed the road till further orders.

The alternative route via the Thali bridge also remains closed after a bridge was damaged. Meanwhile, heavy rain is likely to continue across the state on Monday as the Met department has issued a yellow warning for Shimla, Kullu, Mandi, Kangra, Chamba, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Solan and Sirmaur districts.

HIMACHAL ASSEMBLY MOURNS DEMISE OF FORMER MLA GANESH DUTT BHARWAL

Diary Times Desk : The Vidhan Sabha today offered condolences on the demise of Ganesh Dutt Bharwal, former MLA from Chintpurni in Una from 1980-85, on the opening day of the monsoon session.

The House offered condolences to the family of Bharwal, who passed away at the age of 76 on July 20, 2025, during the obituaries offered by members, cutting across party lines.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the state will remember the invaluable contribution of Bharwal in serving the people of Himachal. "He selflessly served the people of his area and continued doing so till his death," he said. The CM also expressed grief at the deaths that have occurred due to monsoons. Speaker Kuldeep Pathania said Bharwal served the people of his constituency not only in his capacity as and MLA, but right till his last breath. He contributed in ensuring betterment of the poor, downtrodden and women, he added.

HIMACHAL: CONGRESS LEGISLATURE PARTY MEETING HELD BEFORE
START OF MONSOON SESSION

Diary Times Desk : Ahead of the start of the monsoon session today, the meeting of the Congress Legislature Party was held here under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. The meeting was held at Oak Over, the official residence of the Chief Minister to chalk out strategy to counter Opposition attack on various issues. All the ministers, Deputy Speaker Vinay Kumar, party legislators and Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee (HPCC) President Pratibha Chauhan were present.

The monsoon session will commence today and will conclude on September 2, having a total of 12 sittings. So far 981 questions have been received by the Vidhan Sabha from the MLA's apart from 13 notices each for debate under Rule 62 and Rule 130 and six under Rule 101. The Congress will corner the BJP over Modi-led BJP regime not announcing a special financial package for Himachal, in wake of largescale damage to private and public property in rain disaster. The state government also proposes to move a resolution in the Assembly.



BRAVEHEART FROM LAHAUL AND
SPITI'S KISHORI VILLAGE MARTYRED
WHILE ON DUTY AT SIACHEN
GLACIER

Diary Times Desk : Arun, a brave soldier from Kishori village of Lahaul and Spiti district in Himachal Pradesh, attained martyrdom while serving with the Ladakh Scouts regiment as an Agniveer at the treacherous Siachen Glacier.

His untimely demise has cast a shadow of grief over the entire region.

Arun, known for his dedication and patriotism, had joined the Indian Army under the Agnipath scheme and was posted in one of the world's highest and most challenging battlefields. His supreme sacrifice in the line of duty is a testament to the courage and commitment of the young soldiers who guard the nation under extreme conditions.

Lahaul-Spiti MLA Anuradha Rana expressed deep sorrow over the loss, offering heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. "This is an irreparable loss. Soldiers like Arun are the reason our country remains safe. His sacrifice will never be forgotten," she said.

HIMACHAL PWD MINISTER
VIKRAMADITYA SINGH INSPECTS
DAMAGED SUNNI BRIDGE

Diary Times Desk : Public Works and Urban Development (PWD) Minister Vikramaditya Singh today inspected the damaged Thali bridge in Sunni, Shimla district, which has been affected by heavy rains.

The Minister heard the concerns of local populace and assured them that the state government would construct a new bridge to restore connectivity between Shimla and Mandi.

He said the government plans to build a double-lane bridge, with the Public Works Department tasked with identifying a suitable site from Gharat Nola to Ghanghar in the area.

A committee will be formed to conduct a structural audit of the damaged bridge, determining whether it's safe for pedestrian use. The committee's report will guide further action.

The Minister attributed the bridge's damage to the increasing water level caused by the dam, highlighting the need for a new and more resilient bridge.

HEAVY RAINS PROMPT CLOSURE OF 400 ROADS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Diary Times Desk : Heavy rains continued to lash parts of Himachal Pradesh on Monday, triggering landslides at several places and prompting closure of 400 roads, including three national highways.

However, no loss of life was reported, officials said.

The Shimla-Mandi road was closed near Tatti-Pani in Sunni area of Shimla district due to scouring and sliding caused by Satluj river. The width of the road has been reduced to 1.5 metres, making it unsafe for vehicular movement. The alternative route via Thali Bridge is also closed, cutting off Karsog from Shimla.

Road connectivity to about 15 villages was snapped following a massive landslide on Aut-Largi-Sainj road near Pagal Nala in Kullu district, reports said.

Dhaulakuan received 113 mm of rain since Sunday evening, followed by Jot 70.8 mm, Malraon 70 mm, Palampur 58.7 mm, Jatton Barrage 49.4 mm, Paonta Sahib 40.6 mm, Murari Devi 33 mm, Gohar 32 mm, Nahan 30.1 mm, Sarahan 28.5 mm and Dharamsala 24.7 mm.

Sundernagar and Murari Devi witnessed a thunderstorm, while Tabo Reckong Peo and Kufri experienced gusty winds with speeds ranging from 37 to 44 kilometres per hour.

The local meteorological office has issued a 'yellow' warning for heavy rains at isolated places in the state till August 24, except on August 21.



“A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment.”
— Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*



South Korea's population

The writing has been on the wall for a long time: South Korea's birth rate has dropped throughout much of the past decade, spelling trouble for the military as regional threats and global conflicts simmer.

Now, a new report has found that the number of South Korean troops declined by 20% in the past six years, in large part because of the dwindling pool of young men – reflecting the shrinking workforce and swelling elderly population in one of the world's most rapidly aging countries.

The Defense Ministry report attributed the drop to “complex factors” including population decline and fewer men wanted to become officers due to “soldier treatment.” The report didn't elaborate on that treatment but studies and surveys have previously highlighted the military's notoriously harsh conditions.

As of July, the military had 450,000 troops, it said – down from 563,000 in 2019.

“If the number of standing army (members) continues to decline, there can be difficulties in securing elite manpower and limits in operating equipment,” warned the

report, shared last week by lawmaker Choo Mi-ae. The news comes at a bad time for South Korea, a key Western ally which hosts huge numbers of US troops and has a mutual defense treaty with Washington.

Just across the border, neighboring North Korea has sent tens of thousands of soldiers to fight for Russia along the front lines with Ukraine – raising fears that Moscow may share advanced military technology with Pyongyang in exchange, violating international sanctions. Meanwhile, North Korea's ruling Kim family has continued blasting hostile rhetoric, threatening to destroy South Korea with nuclear weapons if attacked and warning that Seoul remains “the enemy.”

However, experts say, that doesn't necessarily mean North Korea's military is better off.

The North is facing its own population woes and birth rate decline – and its technology lags far behind the South, which is now hoping to plug the shortfall in military recruits through innovation.

“South Korea is incomparably far ahead of North Korea in terms of conventional weapons,” said Choi Byung-ook, a national security professor at Sangmyung University. “We have smaller troops now, but I like to say ‘small but strong military’; that's what we need to become.” On the surface, North Korea has a few advantages.

It's one of the world's most heavily militarized nations, with up to 1.3 million armed forces personnel, according to the CIA World Factbook. That's nearly three times higher than South Korea's troop numbers.

Those troops also serve in the military for far longer – an average of 10 years, which allows them to have higher “unit cohesion (and) knowledge of each other's capabilities,” said Sydney Seiler, senior adviser to the Korea Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

By contrast, there's “really not much advanced skills that you can develop” within the year and a half that most South Korean conscripts serve, Seiler said.

North Korea's fertility rate – defined as the average number of children born to a woman in her lifetime – is also far higher, at 1.77 in 2025 compared to South Korea's rate of 0.75, UN data shows. That data also suggests the North has been having more babies per year than the South since 2018, said Jooyung Lee, senior economist at the Bank of Korea Economic Research Institute.



Jessie Yeung
For one, South Korea has a reserve force of about 3.1 million men. While their training may be basic.

Terence Stamp
star and famed figure

Terence Stamp, the British actor who became synonymous with Swinging London in the 1960s, has died, his family said Sunday, according to Reuters. He was 87 years old. Stamp first came to prominence when he took on the titular role in the 1962 film “Billy Budd.” The black and white drama, directed by Peter Ustinov, who also starred, saw Stamp nominated for an Academy Award for best supporting actor - the only Oscar nomination of his lengthy career.



Lianne Kollin

Stamp would become one of the biggest figures of the 1960s London, romantically linked to model Jean Shrimpton and actresses Julie Christie - his “Far From the Madding Crowd” co-star - and Brigitte Bardot.

He went on to star in a host of films in the 1960s, among them John Schlesinger's Thomas Hardy adaptation “Far From the Madding Crowd” and Ken Loach's first feature film, “Poor Cow.”

He was a star who rose from humble beginnings in London's East End, about as far from Hollywood as you can get. He was born on July 22, 1938, to parents Ethel and Thomas, a merchant seaman.

In a 2013 interview with the British Film Institute (BFI), Stamp revealed that his father tried to deter him from a career in showbiz.

“He genuinely believed that people like us didn't do things like that,” he said. But his mother, he said, “loved every second of it.”



Ironically, more than two decades later Stamp went on to voice the role of Superman's father Jor-El in the TV series “Smallville.”

“In retrospect, my mother must have always wanted me to do it and must have wished that she could have been more supportive. But my dad was the head of the family and I never really knew what he thought of it because he was of that generation.

“He was a merchant seaman, he shovelled coal, and in that confined living quarters any show of emotion would have been considered unbearably flash.

His only marriage came in 2002 - to an Australian pharmacist 35 years his junior - but that lasted just six years, according to the Guardian.

Stamp famously roomed with fellow actor Michael Caine, who was also a rising star at the time. The pair lost touch, however, as he disclosed in an interview with The Guardian newspaper in 2015.

We just went different ways. I can understand it: in many ways he was much more mature than me,” he said of Caine, who was five years older.

“Caine gave me all my early values, like making sure you were doing good stuff, waiting for the right things – then as soon as he got away he did exactly the opposite. Went from one movie to another.”

After a few years away from the screen, Stamp appeared in the 1978 blockbuster “Superman” as the superhero's adversary, General Zod. He reprised the role of the comic book villain in the sequel two years later.

His many screen credits also included his role as drag queen Bernadette in the 1990s Australian comedy “The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.” Of his eclectic career - including roles in Hollywood's “Wall Street” and “The Adjustment Bureau” - he told the Guardian that he had no ambitions, adding: “I've had bad experiences and things that didn't work out; my love for film sometimes diminishes but then it just resurrects itself.

“I never have to gee myself up, or demand a huge wage to get out of bed in the morning.

INFA

Taylor Swift's

INVESTMENT GROUP FOR EVADING PURCHASING LIMITS

The US Federal Trade Commission sued ticket reseller Key Investment Group for evading purchasing limits to buy up thousands of tickets to live events including Taylor Swift's Eras tour and resell them at a markup, according to a complaint filed in Maryland federal court on Monday.



Austin Perry

Taylor Swift fans show their Ticketmaster queue, which displays over 2000 people ahead of them, outside of the Taylor Swift concert at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 13, 2023.

The Baltimore, Maryland-based company, which operates ticket resale sites including TotalTickets.com, used thousands of Ticketmaster accounts, including fake or purchased accounts, the FTC said.

Ticketmaster faced intense criticism after its botched 2022 sale of tickets to Swift's much-hyped New Eras Tour, when billions of requests from Swift fans, bots and ticket resellers overwhelmed its website and the company canceled a planned ticket sale to the general public.

For one Swift concert, Key Investment Group used 49 different accounts to purchase 273 tickets and evade a 6-ticket purchase limit, the FTC said on Monday.

FTC Chairman Andrew Ferguson said in a statement that the lawsuit puts ticket sellers on notice that the agency will go after those who circumvent ticketing platforms' limits on ticket sales.

The lawsuit is part of a crackdown President Donald Trump announced in March focused on curbing exploitative ticket reselling practices that raise costs for fans.

Key Investment Group sued the FTC in July to block its investigation, saying that its ticket purchases did not use automated software, or bots, and did not violate the Better Online Ticket Sales (BOTS) Act.

The FTC has made it clear that “they intend to use the BOTS Act to shut down the entire secondary-ticket market,” the company said in its lawsuit.

The agency on Monday accused Key Investment Group and three of its executives of violating the BOTS Act as well as the FTC Act, which prohibits unfair and deceptive business practices.

Ticketmaster and its parent company, Live Nation Entertainment (LYV), are facing a lawsuit brought by U.S. antitrust enforcers accusing the company of monopolizing markets across the live concert industry. Much like Blackstone buying a bunch of housing and making it harder for Americans to buy homes, companies like Key Investment Group are using fake or purchased accounts on

ticketing sites like TicketMaster to buy and resell tickets in bulk, making it harder and more expensive for music fans to get tickets themselves.

The lawsuit stems, in part, from a crackdown President Trump announced in March of this year in an effort to curb exploitative tactics with regard to ticket pricing.

This is an exceptionally delicious slice of irony, seeing how Trump and Swifties have been at each other's throats for years now.

It could have something to do with Trump's early August Truth Social post regarding the “hotness” of the pop star.

It's the most unlikely team-up since Kevin Durant joined the Golden State Warriors, and it will be hilarious to see these Taylor Swift fanatics doing mental gymnastics to try and avoid giving the “Evil Orange Man” any sort of credit.

I don't see a single one of the Swifties thanking Trump on social media, but maybe I'm not looking hard enough.

I'm sure they'll be lining up any minute now to offer their sincere gratitude to the President for helping to make Taylor Swift concerts affordable again.

I can't wait to see the sea of red MAGA hats at Taylor's next concert. It will bring a ton of joy to my heart.

Now if we could just do something about those high concession prices at football games, but I digress.

One step at a time, I suppose.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission is cracking down on ticket resellers trying to circumvent ticketing platforms' limits on ticket sales, with a particular eye for Taylor Swift concerts.

RISHABH PANT IN, SANJU SAMSON OUT: 3 HUGE STARS DROPPED IN SHOCKING ASIA CUP SQUAD BY EX-INDIA STAR

Diary Times Desk : There is some serious competition for India's Asia Cup 2025 squad, meaning that several high-profile stars may miss out. Test captain Shubman Gill is reportedly unlikely to make the cut, while other stars like Shreyas Iyer may also not make it to the final 15. However, former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has included both Gill and Iyer in his 15-man squad for the Asia Cup. Harbhajan has also made some bold calls, leaving out three regular members of India's T20I setup. Harbhajan opted to pick Rishabh Pant and KL Rahul as his two wicket-keeper batters. This meant that he didn't go with Sanju Samson, who has been a consistent opener for India over the past year in T20Is.

Harbhajan also, perhaps surprisingly, left out mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthi from his team.

Instead, Harbhajan went for Kuldeep Yadav as his main spinner, as well as all-rounders Axar Patel and Washington Sundar as his other spin-bowling options.



"NOBODY IS...": SUNIL GAVASKAR'S BLUNT 'JASPRIT BUMRAH SELECTION' MESSAGE TO AJIT AGARKAR

Diary Times Desk : The 'pick and choose' option given to India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah has been a big subject of debate in the country's cricketing spectrum. Bumrah only played three matches on the tour of England, with the team management deciding to rest him for the second and the 5th match of the series. With the Asia Cup 2025 selection know on the horizon, there are some doubts over Bumrah's selection too, considering he is expected to feature in the following Tests against West Indies. Amid this dilemma, India great Sunil Gavaskar has sent a blunt message to Bumrah. "Nobody is indispensable. That's why it is of prime importance for the selectors to now decide when Jasprit Bumrah should be playing. There's already been a lot of debate about his appearances in the recently concluded series in England. To be fair, he had informed the selection committee that he could play only three Tests out of the five. The debate that has generated some heat is whether he should have played the last must-win Test match, especially since it was the grassiest pitch at the Oval in a long time. The next Test match was in early October, and so there were two clear months for him to rest and recover in time for that.

SHUBMAN GILL UNLIKELY FOR ASIA CUP SQUAD AS AJIT AGARKAR ALL SET TO REWARD SHREYAS IYER: REPORT

Diary Times Desk : Ajit Agarkar and the rest of the All India Men's Senior Selection Committee will convene on Tuesday, August 19, to pick the squad for the upcoming Asia Cup. Suryakumar Yadav has cleared the fitness Test and is all set to lead India in the eight-team tournament, beginning September 9. There are several major decisions in front of the selectors. However, the biggest question is whether there can be a place for Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal. Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma have made the most of their chances in the shortest format. Hence, there are no grounds for dropping them. However, Shubman Gill (Test captain) and Jaiswal are two of the biggest names in Indian cricket right now. Hence, it needs to be seen whether the selectors are willing to take a brave call and keep the duo out for now. According to a report in Sportstar, the selectors are all set to make a bold call and leave Gill and Jaiswal out of the squad for the Asia Cup. Ajit Agarkar is all set to retain the core group that has excelled under Gambhir in T20Is recently. The Asia Cup ends on September 28, and the first Test against the West Indies begins on October 2. Considering the turnaround period, the selectors are likely to keep Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal fresh for the red-ball assignments.

LOKOMOTIV FANS WHISTLE SCHALKE'S ANTWI-ADJEI AFTER HIS COMPLAINT OF RACIST ABUSE IN GERMAN CUP GAME

Diary Times Desk : Schalke midfielder Christopher Antwi-Adjei was whistled by Lokomotiv Leipzig supporters after he complained that he was subjected to racist abuse during the teams' German Cup game on Sunday. "Quite simply, it was racism. I think it has no place on a football field or generally in society," Antwi-Adjei, who is Black, told Sky TV after the match. "I don't want to repeat the words that were used, but it's disappointing. I'm not the type to go home and cry, but still it's disappointing that it happens on the field these days." Antwi-Adjei broke off play while taking a throw-in in the 13th minute, and subsequently spoke with a match official on the sideline. Referee Max Burda spoke to both captains while the first-round game was interrupted for around three minutes. The stadium announcer asked fans to refrain from using racist or discriminatory language. Antwi-Adjei was subsequently whistled whenever he received the ball. "There are always a few people here in the stadium who think they can get away with anything. They think they know better," the 31-year-old Antwi-Adjei said. "But yeah, we keep going, we've progressed, and I hope such things don't happen so often in future."



SARFARAZ KHAN SENDS MASSIVE MESSAGE TO BCCI WITH 92-BALL TON FOR MUMBAI

Diary Times Desk : Sarfaraz Khan sent another massive message to BCCI selectors with a sensational century for Mumbai during the Buchi Babu Trophy on Monday. The right-handed batter, who was snubbed for the five-match Test series against England, looked in brilliant form as he slammed a 92-ball ton against TNCA XI. Sarfaraz came out to bat with Mumbai struggling at 98/3 and took the fight to the bowlers. The batter found himself in the headlines recently for his stunning body transformation and will be looking to prove himself as an option for the Test series against West Indies just after Asia Cup 2025. Sarfaraz Khan believes that all Mumbai cricketers should play the Kanga League competition. Sarfaraz turned up for the tournament that is held during Mumbai's monsoon season and said that cricketers should not skip it due to the fear of failure. Sarfaraz was ignored by the BCCI selectors for the five-match Test series against England but the youngster found himself in the headlines due to his stunning body transformation.

IN US OPEN MIXED REVAMP, A THREAT TO DOUBLES FUTURE?



Diary Times Desk : The year's last Grand Slam begins this week with an unconventional first. Mixed doubles as a format in tennis is more than a century old, which the US Open has shaken up through a revamped standalone event starting Tuesday. It largely features top singles stars, with a handful of doubles specialists thrown in to make up the 16-team, two-day, shorter format spectacle. The traditional mixed doubles, a third wheel to the two doubles events at Slams, has been given the boot. From the time this radical move was announced in February, the debate has been about sidelining an entire event and set of players. Reigning US Open mixed doubles champions Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori, who have since been handed a wildcard in the singles-driven field, termed it "profound injustice". Locker room chatter around this appears heading into the innovative unknown. "Most of the chat has been about uncertainty - if this can happen at one Slam, where does it stop?" Rohan Bopanna, India's 2024 Australian Open men's doubles champion who has played doubles with and against top singles players over a two-decade long pro career, told HT from the US.