

Services Offered : Integrated Facility Management - Security Services, Housekeeping Services, Technical Services, Technology Services.

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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Bengaluru, Karnataka

- In a notable move towards technological self-reliance and innovation, Ashwini Vaishnav, the Union Minister for Communications, Electronics, Information Technology, and Railways, inaugurated India's fastest indigenously designed IP/MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) router in Bengaluru on Saturday, 09 March 2024.
- Amidst a water crisis in Bengaluru, the Karnataka government issued a ban on the use of drinking water for various purposes, including washing cars, gardening, construction, and maintenance. The measure aims to conserve water resources in the face of the pressing scarcity issue.

Gujarat

- AMC has entered into an agreement with the World Bank as part of the Gujarat Resilience City Development Programme (GRCDP). The AMC provided the bank with updates on ongoing infrastructure projects, set to be funded by a Rs 3,000 crore loan.

Hyderabad, Telangana

- Despite years of reliable water supply, Hyderabad is now facing an impending drinking water crisis. Depleting reservoir levels, crucial for the city's water supply, and subpar groundwater levels resulting from insufficient rainwater harvesting indicate upcoming challenges, especially during the summer months.
- The foundation for the Rajiv Rahadari Elevated Corridor project was laid on Thursday, 07 March 2024, concluding a decade-long struggle involving multiple Defence Ministers. Initiated in 2015 to address traffic congestion, the project faced hurdles, including land transfer proposals and representations to the Prime Minister, before reaching fruition.

Mumbai, Maharashtra

- The Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission (MERC) partially approved Tata Power's request to increase electricity charges for consumers in Mumbai, providing relief to lower-end users. However, the approved tariff hikes are still expected to be over 50 per cent.
- In response to complaints about harassment and fraud by clean-up marshals, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided not to deploy them without implementing a digital payment and receipt system. Instead of traditional bill books, the system will allow offenders to pay fines online, with marshals equipped with handheld machines for printing receipts containing detailed information such as name, mobile number, ward, GPS location, date, time, and fine amount.
- On International Women's Day, the Maharashtra government introduced the state's Women's Policy, the fourth of its kind, focusing on comprehensive development in eight key areas. These areas include health, nutrition, education, ending gender-based violence, livelihood enhancement, infrastructure, governance, political participation, natural resource management, climate change adaptation, disaster management, and a dedicated sports policy. The policy involves initiatives such as free health check-up camps in underprivileged and remote areas across urban, rural, and tribal regions.

Pune, Maharashtra

- Pune's municipal commissioner, Vikram Kumar, has proposed a rental housing scheme in the city to support the migrant population facing affordability challenges. The civic authority plans to launch a pilot project in the Baner area, aiming to assist individuals migrating to Pune for employment and education by providing affordable rental flats.
- The Regional Transport Office (RTO) is set to target 18 cab companies operating without proper permits, intending to shut down their apps and websites, excluding major players Ola and Uber. This action comes amid disputes over rental policies, leading to recent strikes in the industry.
- Pune Municipal Commissioner Vikram Kumar unveiled the proposed budget for Pune City for 2024-25, totaling Rs 11,601 crore, marking a substantial increase of Rs 2086 crore from the previous year. The budget includes plans for acquiring two high-rise firefighting vehicles with a 24-meter ladder and boosting firefighting capabilities by recruiting 200 new personnel.

Upcoming News/Events

Bengaluru, Karnataka

- Bengaluru is preparing for the introduction of a new Vande Bharat Express to Chennai, covering approximately 350 kilometres from Karnataka's capital. This addition comes alongside an existing Vande Bharat Express service connecting Bengaluru and Chennai, extending its route to include Mysuru.
- The Bangalore Metro Rail Transport Corporation (BMRCL) is gearing up to conduct a test of its driverless train on a designated track. The assembly of this train, slated to operate on the yellow line, has been completed with the involvement of Chinese engineers. The upcoming test marks a significant step in the implementation of driverless technology for the metro system.

Gujarat

- Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd (GUVNL) has signed an agreement with an NLC India subsidiary to purchase power from its upcoming 600 MW solar project in Gujarat. The subsidiary, NLC India Green Energy Ltd (NIGEL), has signed the power purchase agreement with GUVNL for the proposed Khavda Solar Park in Bhuj district.
- Ahmedabad, situated in Gujarat, will face escalating traffic challenges in the future, driven by both local and national highway traffic passing through the city. The anticipated rise in private vehicle ownership is expected to contribute to the chaos, with issues such as non-compliance with lane-driving, a preference for private transport, and reduced deterrence from fines posing future challenges for the Ahmedabad Traffic Police, as predicted by officials.

Hyderabad, Telangana

- In about three months, Hyderabad is set to unveil a cutting-edge multi-level parking complex, 'Novum,' accommodating around 250 cars. Developed under a PPP by HMRL and initiated by former Minister KT Rama Rao, the project aims to address the city's parking challenges, overcoming delays caused by the global pandemic.
- Health and Family Welfare Minister Damodara Rajanarasimha initiated the construction of a 30-bed hospital at Vatpally mandal headquarters with a budget of Rs.11.20 crore. Expressing a commitment to enhance healthcare quality in his constituency, the minister emphasized building new hospitals and enhancing existing ones. Additionally, he visited the Venkata Khaja Dargah, presenting a chadar.

Mumbai, Maharashtra

- Meteorologists anticipate a departure from the recent cold spell, signalling the onset of warmer weather in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The cities are expected to see a rise of 3/4 degrees Celsius in both maximum and minimum temperatures starting this weekend.
- Responding to rising pollution concerns, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is set to acquire four 'Automated Ambient Air Quality Survey Mobile Vans.'
- The central government, through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MHUA), has recommended the reconsideration of six-coach rakes for Thane's ring metro project, proposing that four-coach rakes would adequately cater to potential passenger capacity. This suggestion comes as the government reviews the ambitious ₹14,000 crore project submitted by the state government in August 2021. The ring metro project, covering 29 km with 22 stations, aims to alleviate traffic congestion in Thane and is designed to link with Metro-4 and the suburban Thane railway station, featuring two underground and 20 elevated stations.

Pune, Maharashtra

- Indian Railways will launch a biweekly train service between Pune and Amravati starting March 10, 2024. The Pune-Amravati Bi-Weekly Express (Train No. 11405) will operate every Friday and Monday, while the Amravati-Pune Bi-Weekly Express (Train No. 11406) will run every Saturday and Monday.
- The Equal Water Supply Scheme project, designed to ensure fair water distribution in the city, is expected to be completed this year after a time extension. Pune Municipal Commissioner, Administrator Vikram Kumar, has mentioned that the project will be concluded soon, preparing the ground for its implementation.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

China

- Hong Kong issues a new national security law bill with tougher jail terms.
- On Friday 08 March 2024, Hong Kong unveiled a new national security draft law, expanding the definitions of crimes such as sabotage and sedition with stricter penalties, including life imprisonment. Following China's 2020 security law, the draft bill is anticipated to be passed by lawmakers in weeks, potentially impacting various sectors like business, academia, law, diplomacy, and the media in the global financial hub.
- China and the Maldives ink a historic military assistance deal on March 6, 2024, signaling a strategic shift as the Indian Ocean nation receives "non-lethal" military support and training from China amid tensions with India. President Mohamed Muizzu emphasizes the accord's importance in enhancing the Maldives' independence and marks a departure from China's previous focus on economic development in the region.
- Taiwan's key China policy-making body urges China not to disrupt the "status quo" near Taiwan's frontline islands with coast guard activities. Tensions should remain "controllable," following China's recent patrols around Taiwan-controlled Kinmen islands.

Europe

- On Friday 08 March 2024, the United Nations Security Council urged an immediate halt to hostilities in Sudan. China reminded the council not to overlook the Israel-Hamas conflict, while Russia accused the U.S. of double standards. A British-drafted resolution for a ceasefire during Ramadan received support from 14 members, with Russia abstaining.
- Greece's parliament narrowly approves a bill, despite student protests, allowing foreign private universities to establish branches in the country. The move, passed by 159 lawmakers in the 300-seat parliament, faces criticism from students concerned about the potential devaluation of degrees from public universities.
- The Swiss government approves a new negotiating mandate with the European Union (EU) to modernize their relationship. Focused on securing unrestricted access to the EU marketplace, the plan aims to update existing agreements and establish new sectoral deals in areas such as electricity and food safety.

Middle East

- Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebel group has asserted responsibility for targeting US war destroyers in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden using drones.
- Ongoing efforts to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza have been confirmed by Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad. Despite cautious expectations for a truce during Ramadan, Mossad Chief David Barnea met with CIA Director William Burns to promote a potential deal that includes the release of hostages, as stated in a communication distributed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office.

Pakistan

- Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of Benazir Bhutto, secured victory in Pakistan's presidential election, defeating Mehmood Khan Achakzai. This marks his second term as president, having previously served from 2008 to 2013. Asif Zardari is now elected as the 14th President of Pakistan.
- The newly elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, highlighted the country's alarming debt crisis. Addressing the financial crisis, Sharif emphasized that even the expenditures of the National Assembly were being paid by borrowed money. He asserted that a deep surgery and changes in the system were necessary for fundamental reform. Sharif expressed confidence that Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Asif Ali Zardari, and others would agree that the nation could either break free from a life of debt or move forward with heads down in shame.
- Heavy rains and snowfall in various parts of Pakistan over the last five days have resulted in at least 35 deaths and numerous injuries, as reported by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in the north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Monday, March 4.

United Kingdom

- Economists criticize UK Finance Minister Jeremy Hunt's pre-election budget, deeming the assumptions unrealistic and raising concerns about the future of public services. Hunt's "Budget for Long-Term Growth" involves tax cuts for workers, staying within fiscal rules but facing skepticism due to its limited impact on day-to-day public spending.

United States

- U.S., French, and British forces successfully intercepted numerous drones in the Red Sea region, responding to an attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels on the bulk carrier Propel Fortune and U.S. destroyers. The joint military efforts aimed to thwart the Houthi threat in the area, as reported by the U.S. military.
- President Joe Biden signs a spending bill, averting a partial government shutdown, following the U.S. Senate's approval of spending legislation for various government agencies shortly before the expiration of current funding.

Upcoming News/Events

China

- The human resources minister in China stated on Saturday 09 March 2024, that the country continues to grapple with structural employment challenges, emphasizing that the overall pressure on jobs has not subsided. This comes amid a slowing economy and the anticipation of another record number of college graduates in 2024.

Europe

- Poland's Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, vows to address the grain surplus in domestic markets during talks with farmers in Warsaw, aiming to alleviate their concerns about cheap imports and environmental regulations. Despite the discussions, union leaders express their intent to continue weeks of protests.
- Ukraine is set to receive 6 billion euros (\$6.6 billion) from the European Union through its four-year Ukraine facility in the next two months. The government anticipates receiving 4.5 billion euros in March and an additional 1.5 billion euros in April, as announced by Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal.

Middle East

- The U.S. military anticipates that a floating pier, to be built off Gaza's coastline in coming weeks, will enable delivery of 2 million meals daily to Palestinians amid war.
- The EU plans to initiate a new maritime corridor over the weekend to provide essential aid to Gaza, addressing its ongoing humanitarian crisis. While Israel has welcomed the move, it has faced criticism for its restrictions on aid access.
- A road being built by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) across the 6.5-kilometer-wide (about 4-mile-wide) strip — known as "the Netzarim Corridor" — dividing the north of the enclave from the south, has reached the Mediterranean coast, satellite imagery shows. The road will be used for the movement of troops and logistical equipment as well as providing an "operational foothold" in the area.
- Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan expressed readiness to facilitate a summit between Ukraine and Russia to resolve the ongoing war. After an hour-long meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy in Istanbul, the leaders discussed various aspects, including the conflict, Black Sea shipping security, a defunct grain deal, and defense industry cooperation.

Pakistan

- Pakistan will enter its fourth week of nationwide disruption to the social media platform X, with activists pursuing legal action to restore it. The platform, formerly known as Twitter, was shut down following protests called by the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party against a government official's acknowledgment of vote manipulation in the recent election.

United Kingdom

- The Bank of England announced a 4% staff pay raise, following a 3.5% increase in 2023, aligning with current inflation rates but falling below many major employers' offerings. The raise, effective this month, is accompanied by the continuation of a 1% increase in non-pensionable benefits declared last year.
- On Saturday 09 March 2024 in London, two marches unfolded. The first, a peaceful gathering of tens of thousands supporting an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, commenced at Hyde Park Corner and proceeded towards the American embassy. Simultaneously, some right-wing commentators and politicians perceived these solidarity displays as provocations and threats, echoing the prime minister's portrayal of such gatherings during his March 1 address. The government-appointed commissioner for countering extremism reiterated this perspective.

United States

- Heavy rain and possible severe weather is expected to develop over the Lower Mississippi Valley, the Gulf states and the Southeast on Saturday, according to the National Weather Service.
- The U.S. Coast Guard is investigating the source of an oil spill off Huntington Beach, California, with a sheen measuring approximately 2.5 miles in length and 0.5 miles in width. The spill, located about 2.8 miles off Huntington Beach near oil drilling platforms, was discovered during a Coast Guard helicopter flyover at sunrise.
- The U.S. embassy in Russia issued a warning of imminent plans for an extremist attack in Moscow. This comes after Russian security services claimed to have thwarted a planned shooting at a synagogue by a cell affiliated with the Afghan arm of Islamic State. The embassy advised people to avoid concerts and crowds, emphasizing the need for heightened awareness of surroundings.

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