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## INDIA UPDATE

### Highlights of this week

#### Bengaluru, Karnataka

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday received 10 days of custody of the two key suspects in the Bengaluru Rameshwaram Cafe blast case.
- The Indian Institute of Science's Centre for Ecological Sciences launched India Flora Online (IFO) on Monday (08 April), spearheaded by Prof K Sankara Rao. This unique database catalogs 15,349 species of India's flora.
- A recent report prepared for the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP) has outlined plans for demolishing around 650 structures, including residential, commercial, and other properties, across all four corridors of the extensive 148-kilometre project.

#### Gujarat

- In a recent notification, the Gujarat government specified Buddhism as a distinct religion, necessitating Hindus wishing to convert to Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism to obtain prior approval from district magistrates as per the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003.
- Special polling stations have been established in 11 challenging locations across Gujarat, such as remote forests and small islands, by election authorities to ensure all eligible voters can participate in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

#### Hyderabad, Telangana

- Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania announced the allocation of Rs.100 crore for repairing hand pumps, pump sets, wells, and pipelines. Vikarabad district received Rs.3.54 crore for the repair of 1044 pump sets and 495 hand pumps.
- In preparation for rising power demand, TSSPDCL in Greater Hyderabad is upgrading transformer capacity from 5 MVA to 8 MVA and 12.5 MVA to prevent power interruptions and load shedding.
- The latest quarterly report by ANSR, a key player in establishing Global Capability Centers (GCCs) for multinational firms, reveals Bengaluru and Hyderabad as major GCC hubs, with Bengaluru hosting over 30% and Hyderabad over 19% of the total GCC presence, respectively.

#### Mumbai, Maharashtra

- The BMC is taking proactive steps ahead of the monsoon by stationing three NDRF teams in Mumbai, with an extra team planned for the eastern suburbs due to landslide risks. This decision followed a meeting chaired by BMC's Commissioner and Administrator Bhushan Gagrani, involving multiple agencies such as the Navy, Fire Brigade, Railways, Meteorology Department, and traffic authorities.
- The Bombay High Court recently issued notices to various authorities, including the Maharashtra government and municipal corporations like BMC, Thane, and Mira Bhayander, regarding the harmful effects of wrapping trees with decorative lights during festivals.

#### Pune, Maharashtra

- The Pune Traffic Police has issued changes in traffic at Mangaldas Chowk in view of the proposed demolition of Sadhu Vaswani Bridge.  
For more details on this news- <https://punemirror.com/pune/others/pune-traffic-police-announce-traffic-changes-at-mangaldas-chowk/cid1713001973.htm>
- With temperatures already at a peak, this season can be a hazard for both parents and children. Experts share some dos and don'ts to make life easier for kids.  
For more details on this news- <https://punemirror.com/pune/civic/pune-keep-your-child-safe-from-heat-this-summer/cid1713001902.htm>
- PMC has initiated construction of a new 10-meter-wide bridge parallel to Aga Khan bridge over Mula-Mutha river, connecting Kooregaon Park with Kalyaninagar. This move aims to alleviate traffic congestion in the region, following a traffic survey conducted by PMC.

### Upcoming News/Events

#### Bengaluru, Karnataka

- Namma Yatri (NY) is extending its services to include cab services in Bengaluru, following successful trials after launching auto services in November 2022. The app's 'zero commission' policy ensures cab drivers retain their earnings, with an official launch scheduled for Tuesday (16 April) and only a nominal subscription fee deducted.
- The Bangalore Apartments' Federation (BAF) has signed an agreement with the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to supply treated wastewater from residential communities for construction activities, marking a step towards sustainable water management.
- In preparation for the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) T-20 Cricket matches in Bengaluru on April 15, May 4, May 12, and May 18, 2024, the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has extended its last train services to 11:30 pm from all four terminal metro stations.

#### Gujarat

- Congress candidates in Gujarat are scheduled to submit their nomination forms for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections from April 15 to 17. The voting for all 26 constituencies in Gujarat will take place on May 7 during the third phase of the general elections.
- The Suman High School Board under Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) will introduce courses in artificial intelligence, drones, robotics, and coding for Classes 9 to 12 from the next academic year. This initiative expands educational opportunities in emerging technologies for secondary and higher secondary students within SMC's educational system.

#### Hyderabad, Telangana

- The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board is bolstering its water supply efforts by procuring 100 tankers of 5KL capacity to meet summer demand. An additional 70 mini tankers with 2.5 KL capacity are planned for areas facing polluted water issues.
- IMD's extended range outlook offers relief to Telangana, assuring no heatwave until April 25, following earlier heatwave conditions in early April from the 5th to the 7th.

#### Mumbai, Maharashtra

- Award-winning NGO Project Mumbai is organizing a water bodies and beach cleanup drive on April 20 to commemorate Earth Day, where children from Mumbai will contribute by cleaning up plastic waste from the beaches.
- The BMC intends to launch an app that enables dabbawalas to provide door-to-door delivery services for products made by women's self-help groups in Mumbai. This initiative also involves partnering with SNDT University's incubation centre to promote and market these products effectively through the app.
- The Vande Bharat Express train, operating between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, is set to undergo speed trials at 160 kmph, potentially reducing travel time between the two cities by 45 minutes.

#### Pune, Maharashtra

- The State Transport Appellate Tribunal (STAT) has scheduled a hearing on April 22 to determine the eligibility of the online cab aggregator Ola to operate within Pune city limits.
- The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) intends to demolish the Sadhu Vaswani Railway Overbridge after the Lok Sabha elections, awaiting approval from the Pune traffic police department.
- Ganeshkhind Road in Pune is poised for significant development, featuring plans for a double-deck flyover and a new metro line.  
For more details on this news- <https://www.punekarnews.in/punes-ganeshkhind-road-set-for-major-expansion-with-double-deck-flyover-and-metro-line/>

**GLOBAL UPDATE****Highlights of this week****China**

- A magnitude 5.5 earthquake hit Tibet, China, according to the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ), though they initially recorded it as 5.7. The quake occurred at a depth of 10 km and was reported as Xizang by China, which governs the region.
- China reported direct economic losses totaling 23.76 billion yuan (\$3.28 billion) in the first quarter due to floods, droughts, an earthquake, and freezing conditions.

**Europe**

- In Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region, a Russia-installed official reported that Ukraine's military shelling in the town of Tokmak resulted in the deaths of 10 people, including three children. Yevgeny Balitsky, the top Moscow-installed official in the area, also mentioned that 18 individuals were wounded in the Friday night (12 April) shelling.
- Police forces in Spain have apprehended a criminal gang accused of defrauding victims across 35 countries, amounting to 645 million euros, in a scheme involving cannabis plants intended for medical purposes.
- Authorities in Orenburg, Russia, issued an urgent evacuation order to thousands of residents on Friday 12 April as floodwaters surged due to major rivers overflowing from historic snowmelt.

**Middle East**

- On 13 April, Iran's Revolutionary Guards confiscated an Israeli-linked cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz, escalating tensions after threats of retaliation for an Israeli strike on its Syria consulate and warnings of potentially closing the vital shipping route.
- A cable car cabin in southern Turkey's Antalya collided with a broken pole, leading to a major rescue operation that successfully saved an additional 174 passengers.
- Poland's parliament has forwarded four bills aiming to liberalize abortion laws to a special bipartisan committee for review, reflecting collaboration between ruling coalition parties despite significant disagreements on the issue.
- A large group of Israelis protested against their government over the ongoing conflict in Gaza and the lack of progress in negotiations to free hostages held by Hamas. They specifically called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to end the six-month-long war.

**Pakistan**

- A coalition of six opposition parties, Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), has launched a nationwide movement advocating for the rule of law from Balochistan's Pishin. Led by PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan, the movement aims to gather support from various sectors to challenge the PML-N-led coalition government.
- Lightning strikes during heavy rainfall claimed 15 lives in Punjab and Balochistan on Saturday 13 April, as reported by the Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMA). Thirteen fatalities occurred in Punjab, while Balochistan recorded an additional two deaths, bringing the total in the latter to five due to recent lightning incidents amid rainy weather.

**United Kingdom**

- Qantas Airways announced on Saturday (13 April) that it had temporarily changed flight routes between Perth and London due to concerns over the Middle East, amid heightened expectations of potential hostilities between Iran and Israel.
- Britain's climate change minister, Graham Stuart, resigned from the government after eight years, stating it was the appropriate moment to step down.
- Ukraine and Britain have finalized a framework agreement for collaboration in defense and arms production, a strategic move aimed at enhancing Ukraine's domestic weapons industry through partnership with allies during wartime.

**United States**

- Reproductive rights advocates gathered in Florida to back a referendum for abortion protections in the state constitution, aiming to bolster Democratic prospects in the upcoming presidential election. In Arizona, activists plan a rally in response to the state's highest court reviving an old abortion ban.
- On April 12, the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives voted to reauthorize a controversial surveillance program, indicating a significant step in sustaining vital foreign intelligence collection efforts.
- A bipartisan group of senators, including Chris Coons and James Risch, introduced a bill to renew the U.S. trade pact with sub-Saharan Africa before its expiration next year. Senators Dick Durbin, Michael Bennet, Chris van Hollen, Todd Young, and Mike Rounds are co-sponsors of the bill, highlighting broad support across party lines.

**Upcoming News/Events****China**

- A cooperation agreement by the Philippines, the United States and Japan will change the dynamic in the South China Sea and the region, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Friday, while seeking to assure China it was not a target.
- China's top legislator, Zhao Leji, said it is Beijing's consistent strategic policy to defend and develop friendly relations between China and North Korea
- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reiterated his commitment to strengthening longstanding relations with China during a meeting with Chinese top legislator Zhao Leji, as reported by state media KCNA on Sunday (14 April).
- The Philippines reaffirmed its commitment to defending its territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea during a meeting with U.S. allies. This comes amidst escalating tensions with China over control of the strategic waterway.

**Europe**

- Ukraine's national railways Ukrzaliznytsia has extended the ban on transportation towards the large Black Sea port of Chornomorsk until April 17, citing ongoing security concerns amid Russian attacks targeting energy and transport infrastructure in the Odessa region.

**Middle East**

- Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist organization, declined an Israeli ceasefire offer and provided its response to mediators in Egypt and Qatar. Despite ongoing talks for over six months, Hamas insists that any agreement must lead to the end of the conflict.
- Austrian Airlines, the final West European carrier serving Iran, announced the suspension of flights from Vienna to Tehran until April 18 due to heightened tensions in the area. Austria's decision to continue flights longer than Lufthansa was based on Vienna's closer proximity to Tehran, facilitating quicker flight adjustments or potential overnight stays for crew.

**Pakistan**

- Pakistan's central bank announced the repayment of \$1 billion in Eurobonds on Saturday (13 April), which was a scheduled payment preceding the country's efforts to secure a long-term bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is set to visit China to address growing safety concerns among Chinese companies after a terrorist attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that claimed the lives of five Chinese engineers. The visit aims to express solidarity and discuss the current situation with Chinese officials.

**United Kingdom**

- Britain's sluggish economy appears poised to emerge from a mild recession as February saw consecutive growth months, with a revised upward January reading, as indicated by official data released on Friday (12 April).
- Britain's defence ministry announced plans to equip warships with lasers by 2027 to counter drones more affordably, accelerating the deployment of new technology by five years.
- British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Rwandan President Paul Kagame expressed anticipation for the initial flights under Britain's asylum deportation plan to Rwanda, set to commence in spring. The initiative aims to relocate numerous asylum seekers arriving via small boats to Rwanda, although legal hurdles have stalled any actual transfers thus far.

**United States**

- The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee announced plans for a hearing next week, featuring members of an expert panel that recently criticized Boeing's safety culture and urged substantial improvements. This comes amid Boeing's ongoing safety crisis, marked by a January mid-air panel blowout on a 737 MAX 9, leading to management changes, production restrictions by regulators, and a significant drop in aircraft deliveries in March.
- The FBI director expressed concerns about the potential for an organized attack in the United States, citing similarities to the recent deadly incident at a Russian concert hall. He shared these concerns during a House of Representatives panel session on Thursday (11 April).
- U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink is set to visit China from April 14 to 16, accompanied by White House National Security Council Senior Director for China and Taiwan Affairs Sarah Beran. This visit follows President Biden's recent summit with leaders from Japan and the Philippines, which focused on China's activities in the South China Sea.

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