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## INDIA UPDATE

### Highlights of this week

#### Bengaluru, Karnataka

- In two weeks, over 500 establishments including apartments, government organizations, IT companies, and educational institutions in Bengaluru have joined BWSSB's Green Star Challenge, promoting water-saving initiatives in the city.
- Due to BWSSB pipeline construction between VIBGYOR Cross Road and Black And White Road from May 3 to May 18, traffic in the area will be disrupted, with all vehicular movement restricted during this period.

For more insights on this news- <https://www.timesnownews.com/bengaluru/bengaluru-traffic-from-vibgyor-cross-road-to-black-white-junction-to-be-affected-till-may-18-check-alternate-routes-article-109786727>

#### Gujarat

- To boost voter awareness, voluntary organizations in the city have erected large hoardings urging citizens to vote on May 7. However, some hoardings displaying incorrect voting timings led to confusion, prompting election officials to issue clarifications about the polling schedule.
- On Saturday 04 May, DCM Shriram Limited revealed the completion of its Caustic Soda Expansion Project, boosting its chemical complex in Jhagadia, Bharuch district, by 850 tonnes per day (TPD). This addition brings the company's total caustic soda production to 2,255 TPD, solidifying its position as the largest caustic soda facility in India at the Bharuch Chemical Complex.

#### Hyderabad, Telangana

- Amid Hyderabad's severe heatwave, recent research conducted by IIT Hyderabad in collaboration with Swastik Harish and Associates and Hyderabad Urban Lab has shed light on varying degrees of summer heat experienced across different housing settlements. The study focused on understanding heat variations in building structures and localities, particularly examining two low-income unplanned urban slums: Singareni Colony near Saroornagar and Bholakpur near Secunderabad.
- Officials from Hyderabad Airport Metro Rail Ltd (HAML), led by Managing Director NVS Reddy, undertook a 14-kilometre walk to map out the route and assess potential station locations for the upcoming Airport Metro line. The initiative began with a walk from Nagole to Chandrayangutta, marking the initial phase of the Airport Metro project.

#### Mumbai, Maharashtra

- The BMC issued an alert on Saturday 04 May following warnings from IMD and INCOIS about high swell waves in the sea expected to last for 36 hours. Citizens were urged to avoid beach areas and cooperate with authorities.
- Maharashtra is grappling with severe water scarcity as dams hold only 28.3% water, leading to a surge in water tanker deployment to 2,952 compared to last year's 187. Marathwada faces the worst situation with only 12.16% water, down from 47.14% last year, followed by Pune division at 24.03%, down from 30.73% last year.

#### Pune, Maharashtra

- April's extreme heat in Pune has set records, marking the highest daytime temperatures since 2013 and the second-highest nighttime temperatures in over a decade, highlighting the severity of this year's heatwave.
- The Pune Municipal Corporation has decided to avoid significant water supply disruptions until the polling days on May 7 and 13. This decision aims to ensure uninterrupted water services for residents, as it typically takes several days to fully restore water supply after maintenance or closures. Major repair works and closures will be scheduled after the elections are concluded in Pune and nearby areas under the corporation's jurisdiction.

### Upcoming News/Events

#### Bengaluru, Karnataka

- After a prolonged dry spell, Bengaluru saw rainfall, providing relief from scorching temperatures. The India Meteorological Department predicts more light rain for the IT hub throughout the week.
- The Vande Bharat Express is set to run from Ernakulam to Bengaluru once Lok Sabha polls' model code of conduct ends, with Ernakulam Marshalling Yard's electrification completed for more efficient train operations.
- To prevent future flooding in Bengaluru's Mahadevapura tech corridor, the city's civic body has approved 47 projects totaling Rs 50 crore. These initiatives encompass road improvements and enhanced drainage systems, aiming to fortify the area's infrastructure against flooding incidents witnessed over the past two years.

#### Gujarat

- The Lok Sabha elections in Gujarat are set for May 7, 2024, with a single-phase voting system. Gujarat with 26 Lok Sabha seats, will see contesting for 25 seats in the third phase as BJP's candidate in Surat, Mukesh Dalal, has won uncontested due to Congress Nilesh Kumbhani's nomination rejection and other withdrawals.
- Following reprimand from the Gujarat high court regarding plastic pollution in the Gir eco-sensitive zone (ESZ), the Junagadh district administration is cracking down on suppliers and manufacturers using single-use plastic. They've held meetings with suppliers of items like namkeen packets, water bottles, plastic bags, and ice cream, urging them to halt supplies to retailers within the ESZ.

#### Hyderabad, Telangana

- Hyderabad Metro Rail (HMR) is preparing to construct a new metro station in Nagole, strategically positioned near the current Blue Line terminal station. This initiative forms a crucial segment of the planned metro link that will connect to Shamshabad International Airport, featuring a skywalk linking the two stations at the concourse level.

#### Mumbai, Maharashtra

- The future Navi Mumbai airport will use "NMI" as its IATA location code, as confirmed by the airport operator. IATA codes are vital in aviation for identifying destinations and traffic documents, ensuring efficient operations in passenger and cargo services.
- Bandra West MLA Ashish Shelar announced the cancellation of BMC's plan to build an elevated east-west connector over Khar subway on Friday 03 May. This decision came after discussions with the chief minister, deputy CM, and BMC commissioner, following objections from local residents regarding the proposed design and concerns raised by citizen welfare groups and resident associations.
- Motorists in Mumbai will have direct access to the south-bound corridor of the Coastal Road from Bandra-Worli Sea Link starting June, following BMC's successful launch of a 2,000-metric ton bowstring arch bridge connecting the two sea links. The bridge, spanning 136m, was erected in around an hour, completing work initiated at 2.20 am on Friday 03 May.

#### Pune, Maharashtra

- Commuters passing through Agriculture College Chowk will face diversions due to changes in vehicular flow along Ganeshkhind Road to Shimla Office Chowk, necessitated by ongoing Metro work. Traffic from FC Road and SPPU Chowk will be redirected via Narveer Tanaji Wadi Road starting May 4, aiding Metro construction activities.
- To address disputes between flat buyers and developers and enhance transparency regarding the provision of amenities within set deadlines, Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority (MahaRERA) is proposing norms. MahaRERA Secretary Vasant Prabhu has invited feedback from stakeholders on the facilities and amenities that promoters must provide in real estate projects. The circular specifies that promoters must indicate the precise date by which these facilities and amenities will be available, along with their size and area. Stakeholders can submit their inputs, suggestions, and objections until May 27 via [secy@maharera.mahaonline.gov.in](mailto:secy@maharera.mahaonline.gov.in).

## GLOBAL UPDATE

## Highlights of this week

## China

- China successfully launched an unmanned spacecraft on a groundbreaking mission to collect rocks and soil from the moon's far side, marking the first-ever such endeavor by any nation. The Long March-5 rocket carried the Chang'e-6 probe, weighing over 8 metric tons, which will land in the South Pole-Aitken Basin and bring back samples from the moon's hidden face.
- Taiwan's defense ministry reported a fresh intrusion of Chinese military aircraft in the Taiwan Strait, coinciding with China's navy conducting combat exercises involving landing craft. China has escalated military operations around Taiwan in recent years, despite Taiwan's autonomous governance and rejection of Beijing's territorial claims over the island.

## Europe

- German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, along with European Union leaders, strongly condemned a series of recent attacks targeting politicians in Germany. This includes an incident where a member of the European Parliament was hospitalized with severe injuries.
- Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze dismissed criticism from the United States and European Union regarding a proposed "foreign agents" law on Friday 03 May, stating that opponents of the bill were not open to constructive dialogue. The draft law, currently under review in the Georgian parliament, mandates that organizations receiving over 20% of their funding from abroad register as foreign agents.
- The European Union and the United States jointly criticized legislation progressing through Georgia's parliament regarding "foreign agents" on Thursday 02 May. This bill mandates that organizations getting more than 20% of their funding from abroad must register as agents of foreign influence, a move protested by many as authoritarian and influenced by the Kremlin.

## Middle East

- Hamas representatives have initiated more focused discussions regarding a potential ceasefire in Gaza, which would involve an end to hostilities and the repatriation of certain captives to Israel. The CIA director is already in Cairo for indirect diplomatic efforts related to these discussions.
- Israeli forces carried out an operation in the occupied West Bank, resulting in the deaths of five Palestinians, including four members of Hamas' al-Qassam armed wing, according to both Palestinian and Israeli sources on Saturday. Hamas confirmed the affiliation of the deceased fighters from the Deir al-Ghusun village.

## Pakistan

- Pakistan witnessed its wettest April since 1961, with rainfall exceeding the usual amount for the month by more than double, according to the country's meteorological agency. The recorded rainfall for April was 59.3 millimeters, significantly above the normal average of 22.5 millimeters, as stated in Pakistan's metrology department's monthly climate report released on Friday 03 May.
- On Friday 03 May, Pakistan launched its inaugural lunar mission, iCube-Qamar, in collaboration with China, from the city of Hainan. The satellite is set to orbit the moon as part of China's Chang'e-6 space mission. The launch, conducted using a Chinese Long March5 Y8 rocket, was broadcast live on Pakistani TV channels and Chinese state television.

## United Kingdom

- Sadiq Khan secured his re-election as London's mayor, as confirmed by final results announced on Saturday. This victory further solidifies the Labour Party's strong position compared to the governing Conservatives in local elections, setting the stage for Britain's upcoming national vote later in the year.
- Several dozen individuals arrived on the southern coast of England in two rubber dinghies on Saturday 04 May, joining the ongoing trend of asylum-seekers crossing the perilous English Channel from France. The boats were escorted by a French naval vessel until they reached English waters, highlighting the challenges faced by migrants in making this risky journey.
- London's High Court ruled on Friday 03 May that Britain's climate action plan is illegal as ministers were not adequately informed of the risks associated with key policies' feasibility. This decision poses a significant challenge as Britain aims for net zero emissions by 2050, requiring a new plan submission.

## United States

- Following unsuccessful negotiations between administrators and student leaders, police detained numerous individuals and disbanded protest encampments, mirroring demonstrations seen at colleges globally.
- On Friday 03 May, President Joe Biden upheld his promise by vetoing a Republican-backed measure aimed at repealing a U.S. labor board rule. This rule treats companies as the employers of numerous contract and franchise workers, mandating them to engage in negotiations with the respective unions of these workers.

## Upcoming News/Events

## China

- France's cosmetics industry, a global leader, is looking to the upcoming discussions between Xi Jinping and Emmanuel Macron as a means to mitigate the effects of stringent new Chinese import regulations. These rules demand the disclosure of formulas and manufacturing expertise, posing challenges for French companies.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping is embarking on his first European tour in five years next week, visiting France, Serbia, and Hungary. This visit comes at a critical juncture, highlighting potential European rifts on trade relations with Beijing and the EU's stance as a bridge between the United States and China. Tensions may escalate as the EU considers tariffs on China's electric vehicle and green energy sectors, citing concerns about unfair subsidies.

## Europe

- Ukraine's central bank unveiled significant currency liberalization measures, its largest during wartime, to ease restrictions for businesses, marking a pivotal step more than two years after Russia's invasion triggered stringent controls. The new provisions, set to take effect on May 4, aim to support businesses, relax capital outflow constraints, and ease foreign exchange controls that were tightened post the February 2022 invasion.
- On Thursday 02 May, France and Japan announced plans to initiate formal discussions on a reciprocal troop access deal, aiming to bolster military cooperation amid escalating maritime tensions in the Indo-Pacific and the conflict in Ukraine. The agreement, sought by Paris for over a year, will facilitate easier entry for foreign personnel and equipment, enhancing joint military efforts between the G7 allies.

## Middle East

- The construction of a maritime pier off the coast of Gaza by the U.S. military has been temporarily halted due to adverse weather conditions, as announced on Friday 03 May. Construction activities will resume at the Israeli port of Ashdod instead. The pier is intended to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, but high winds and sea swells have rendered the work unsafe, prompting the relocation of construction activities to Ashdod.
- Qatar is considering the closure of Hamas' political office as it conducts a wider assessment of its role in mediating the conflict between Israel and the militant Palestinian group.

## Pakistan

- Media organizations in Pakistan have expressed concerns about the state of 'free media' in the country as the world marked Press Freedom day on Friday 03 May. Reports from various media sources highlighted restrictions imposed on mainstream media and social media during Pakistan's election season. Associations such as the association of electronic media editors and news directors (AEMEND) have committed to ongoing constitutional and legal efforts to uphold freedom of expression in Pakistan.

## United Kingdom

- Buckingham Palace announced that King Charles and senior British royals will step down from nearly 200 charity roles following a review post-Queen Elizabeth's passing. This move comes after evaluating over 1,000 associations, with about 830 patronages retained or transferred to other royal family members, highlighting the role of royal patronage in promoting organizations' causes.
- On Friday 03 May, Britain's oil and gas regulator granted 31 new hydrocarbon exploration licenses in a bid to prolong production in the aging basin.
- British authorities have begun detaining migrants in preparation for their potential transfer to Rwanda within the next nine to 11 weeks, marking the implementation of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's immigration policy. This move follows parliamentary approval of a law enabling the deportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda if they enter Britain without permission.

## United States

- On Thursday 02 May, Maryland estimated the cost of rebuilding the collapsed Baltimore bridge to be between \$1.7 billion and \$1.9 billion, with an anticipated completion date of fall 2028. The Maryland Department of Transportation indicated that this estimate aligns with projects of similar scale and complexity. The collapse occurred when the Dali cargo ship collided with the Francis Scott Key Bridge on March 26, resulting in six fatalities. Maryland intends to solicit proposals for the bridge's reconstruction by the end of May and plans to hold an industry forum on Tuesday 07 May.
- Italian construction group Webuild (WBD.MI) announced on Friday 03 May its proposal to rebuild Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge, which collapsed in March following a collision with a container ship. The project, outlined by Webuild, entails designing and planning for the reconstruction of a cable-stayed bridge. The primary goals of the project are to enhance safety, adaptability, sustainability, and ensure optimal navigation safety.

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