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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Bengaluru, Karnataka

- The BBMP's multi-level pay-and-park facility in Freedom Park in the heart of the city opened on Thursday, June 20. The facility can accommodate 600 automobiles and 750 motorcycles at any given time.
- The halted building of the railway underpass on Panathur Main Road has caused major difficulty to daily travelers, resulting in visible dissatisfaction among locals and workers. Since the under bridge extension project was delayed, traffic congestion has occurred all the way from Kadubeesanahalli Junction.

Gujarat

- On June 22, a massive fire broke out at a rubber and plastic goods manufacturing facility in Silvassa in the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Officials said no casualties had been recorded so far, and the origin of the incident was unknown.
- Diamond City's hydraulic department supplies an average of 1,500 million litres per day (MLD) of water to its population of over 8 million throughout the year. However, the city civic body's water supply team faces an unusual increase in leakage complaints during winter, with incidents nearly 2.5 times higher compared to summer, even though water supply is at its peak during the hotter months.

Hyderabad, Telangana

- Heavy rains in Hyderabad on Monday 17 June caused widespread waterlogging, traffic jams, power outages, and tree felling, significantly impacting visibility. The downpour affected multiple areas within the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits, including Kukatpally, Miyapur, and Hitec City. Residents shared visuals of the rain and waterlogging on social media platforms.

Mumbai, Maharashtra

- Three months after it opened, a foot of road near Navi Mumbai collapsed, and a section of the Atal Setu bridge started to break. For the MTHL, the state paid ₹18,000 crore.
- On June 18, an email containing bomb threats was sent to more than fifty hospitals and colleges in Mumbai. The email claimed that bombs had been placed in bathrooms and under beds and could destroy the hospitals when they exploded.
- The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) completed the second phase of a 9.7-km water supply tunnel, making Mumbai the second city after New York with over 100 km of such tunnels. This phase included a 5.25-km stretch between Wadala and Parel, with the entire project expected to be operational by April 2026. Once completed, it will improve water supply and pressure in several areas of south and central Mumbai.

Pune, Maharashtra

- The Sadhu Vaswani Railway Flyover path in Koregaon Park is constantly congested due to the structure's closure for demolition and renovation.
- Traffic Police have imposed limitations on heavy trucks from Katraj-Kondhwa Road near Kanha Hotel (Shatrunjay Temple) to Gangadham Chowk, including Tilak Nagar in Kondhwa. Concrete mixers, containers, trailers, and other heavy vehicles are now banned from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.
- From June 20 to June 22, Pune experienced generally cloudy skies with light to moderate rain, with temperatures ranging from 22°C to 31°C on June 20, and 22°C to 30°C on June 21 and 22. June 23, Pune was having similar conditions, with temperatures between 21°C and 30°C. Rainfall intensity is expected to increase on June 24 and 25, with temperatures ranging from 22°C to 29°C.

Upcoming News/Events

Bengaluru, Karnataka

- Due to maintenance work, the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (BESCOM) has scheduled power outages in several parts of Bangalore, Karnataka (KA), from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on June 24.
- Kempegowda Jayanti, which commemorates the 515th birth anniversary of Bengaluru's founder, will be held statewide on June 27.
- According to Karnataka's ADGP for Traffic and Road Safety, the entire Bengaluru-Mysuru Road network, comprising the highway, Mysuru district, and city, will become a fully functional ITMS corridor beginning July 1.

Gujarat

- The Congress has called for 'Rajkot Bandh' on June 25, the first month death anniversary of the Rajkot TRP Game Zone fire catastrophe, demanding that the government raise compensation granted to the victims and their relatives.
- In response to the increasing incidence of accidents in Ahmedabad, traffic police will start a drive for wrong-side automobiles beginning June 22. This drive will continue until June 30.

Hyderabad, Telangana

- The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has initiated a plan to enhance traffic flow at over 100 junctions by removing obstacles and widening roads to facilitate easier left turns for commuters. The initiative, targeting 127 key intersections including Punjagutta, Jubilee Hills Road No. 36, Mehdiapatnam, and Gachibowli, aims to clear encroachments to ensure smooth vehicle movement. For instance, if a road is supposed to be 65 meters wide but is reduced to 55 meters due to encroachments, GHMC will remove the obstacles to restore the correct width.

Mumbai, Maharashtra

- The weather bureau has extended the yellow alert for Mumbai and Palghar until June 26. For Raigad and Thane, an orange alert has been issued for June 25 and 26.
- The 131-year-old Bellasis rail overbridge at Mumbai Central, which connects Dr. Anandrao Nair Marg in the east to Vasantrao Naik Chowk in the west, will close for 18 months for demolition and reconstruction beginning June 24.

Pune, Maharashtra

- Jagatguru Sant Tukaram's procession will commence on June 28, followed by Santshreshtha Dnyaneshwar Maharaj's procession on June 29, both journeying towards Pandharpur.
- The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an advisory for moderate rain and strong downpours in Pune, particularly in Ghat areas.
- The Pune-Mumbai Highway has been experiencing significant traffic snarls, especially on weekends, causing considerable inconvenience to small vehicles and motorists due to heavy vehicles on the road. In response to commuter complaints, the city administration has permanently banned heavy vehicles from the stretch. Effective immediately, heavy and bulky vehicles are prohibited from 6 am to 10 pm on the old Pune-Mumbai National Highway through Lonavla city.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

China

- In March, the U.S. and China resumed semi-official nuclear arms talks for the first time in five years. Chinese representatives assured their U.S. counterparts that they would not use nuclear threats over Taiwan, emphasizing confidence in prevailing through conventional means, according to American delegates.
- Pope Francis has appointed Giuseppe Yang Yongqiang as the bishop of Hangzhou, Zhejiang, in eastern China, the Vatican announced on Saturday 22 June. This move, following the 2018 landmark accord renewed in 2022, aims to strengthen Vatican-Beijing relations and bridge the divide between China's underground Catholics loyal to the pope and the state-backed official church.

Europe

- On Saturday 22 June, Russian guided bombs struck an apartment building in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, killing three people and injuring 29, including two children. In response, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called for increased support from Kyiv's allies to stop the attacks, emphasizing the need for decisive action to halt Russian military aggression.

Middle East

- At least 42 individuals lost their lives in Israeli airstrikes targeting neighborhoods in Gaza City's northern region on Saturday 22 June, as reported by the director of the media office under the administration of Hamas.
- The ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza has sparked concerns of a broader escalation, evident in missile intercepts and fires from airstrikes in northern Israel and southern Lebanon. Hezbollah's leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, issued stark warnings of potential widespread danger, including threats to Cyprus and other Mediterranean regions, intensifying the rhetoric exchanged between the parties involved.

Pakistan

- The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Punjab, Pakistan, has successfully thwarted a significant terror plot by apprehending 22 suspected terrorists associated with ISIS, TTP, BLA, and LeJ. The arrests were made during 152 intelligence-based operations conducted across various districts of Punjab this week, according to a CTD spokesperson. The suspected terrorists were taken into custody from multiple locations, including Lahore, Attock, Sheikhpura, Muzaffargarh, Nankana Sahib, Bahawalpur, DG Khan, Faisalabad, Multan, Bahawalnagar, and Rawalpindi.
- The HRCP highlighted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's human rights and law enforcement challenges due to the absence of elections and legislative activity in 2023. However, the Peshawar High Court's decision enabled elected local bodies to function, providing essential services. The province also faced security issues, with casualties among law enforcement, civilians, and alleged militants in targeted attacks and operations.

United Kingdom

- Emperor Naruhito and his wife commenced their week-long journey to Britain, including a visit to Oxford University and a banquet with King Charles, but no official meeting with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is planned.
- Britain significantly reduced arms export licenses to Israel during the Gaza conflict, marking a 13-year low with a drop of over 95% in permit value. The United States and Germany, however, increased arms sales to Israel during this period.

United States

- The U.S. Supreme Court upheld a federal law barring individuals under domestic violence restraining orders from possessing firearms, siding with the Biden administration. The 8-1 decision, written by Chief Justice John Roberts, overturned a lower court ruling and rejected claims that the law violated Second Amendment rights.
- Two fatalities have been reported in wildfires in southern New Mexico, which have also destroyed around 500 homes and forced the evacuation of approximately 8,000 residents from Ruidoso. Among the victims is 60-year-old Patrick Pearson, and the remains of an unidentified person were found in a burned car. Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham stated that over 1,400 buildings, including about 500 homes, were destroyed, marking one of the state's most devastating wildfires.

Upcoming News/Events

China

- China and the EU have agreed to initiate talks on proposed tariffs for Chinese-made electric vehicles entering Europe, marking a significant step after weeks of stalled negotiations. This comes amid broader tensions, including China's increased trade with Russia during the Ukraine conflict.

Europe

- Barcelona, a top Spanish holiday destination, announced on Friday 21 June that it will ban apartment rentals to tourists by 2028 to address soaring housing costs and improve livability for residents. Mayor Jaume Collboni stated that by November 2028, the city will revoke the licenses of the 10,101 apartments currently approved for short-term rentals, citing the housing affordability crisis driven by a 68% rent increase over the past decade.
- Moldova, a staunch critic of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, vowed on Thursday 20 June to crack down on athletes and cultural figures traveling to Russia without permission. This follows the participation of six Moldovan athletes in the BRICS Games in Kazan. The National Olympic Committee emphasized that sports federations must prevent such activities, supporting the International Olympic Committee's stance against holding competitions in Russia and opposing the politicization of sports.

Middle East

- The UN holds Israel accountable as the occupying power in Gaza for restoring order to ensure safe humanitarian aid delivery amid escalating conflict with Hamas. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warns of a looming famine and highlights challenges in aid distribution due to lawlessness and Israeli restrictions on aid security. Israel's military announced a daily pause in attacks to facilitate access to crucial aid routes.
- The World Health Organization and the World Food Programme have warned of a health crisis in Gaza due to intense heat exacerbating existing challenges like displacement, water shortages, and food insecurity. WHO's representative highlighted risks such as disease outbreaks, water contamination, food spoilage, and insect-related health problems due to the extreme temperatures.

Pakistan

- Pakistan is aiming to borrow at least \$23 billion in the next fiscal year, including a \$12 billion bilateral debt rollover, to bolster its development projects and address external financing requirements. This strategy, which involves borrowing from global financial institutions like the IMF, is expected to influence Pakistan's foreign and economic policies moving forward.

United Kingdom

- A survey revealed that British businesses are experiencing their slowest expansion since last year's recession, with some delaying major decisions until after the July 4 election. Opinion polls indicate a potential return to power for Keir Starmer's Labour Party, signaling a potential historic defeat for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives. The S&P Global Composite Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 51.7 in June, its lowest level since November 2023, indicating subdued economic activity.
- Britain's Labour Party is contemplating raising capital gains tax and changing inheritance tax to raise funds for public services if it wins the upcoming election. This move, estimated to generate around 10 billion pounds, includes tightening rules on gifts under inheritance tax. Labour emphasizes economic growth over tax hikes, while the Conservative Party criticizes Labour's lack of transparency on tax plans.

United States

- In a first for the party, Democrats will allow social media influencers to cover their political convention in Chicago this summer, aiming to connect with voters beyond traditional media. This move comes as part of efforts to counter Donald Trump's strong presence on social media ahead of what polls suggest could be a tight race in the upcoming U.S. presidential election.
- The Pentagon stated that Ukraine can use U.S.-supplied weapons to target Russian forces firing at Ukrainian troops across the border into Russia, not just near Ukraine's Kharkiv region. Although President Joe Biden previously authorized Kyiv to use these weapons near the Russian border, the policy now extends to any locations where Russian forces engage Ukrainian troops. This decision emphasizes Ukraine's ability to defend itself when attacked by Russian forces using U.S.-provided munitions.

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