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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- The state government transferred nine senior IPS officers on Thursday 11 July. Vijayawada police commissioner P H D Ramakrishna is now IG provisioning and logistics, while S V Rajasekhar Babu is appointed as the new commissioner of Vijayawada.
- In his first month of the 'Naidu 4.0' administration, Chief Minister Naidu has adopted a 'simple government and effective governance' approach. He is actively fulfilling election promises, attracting investments, and working to rebuild the brand image of Andhra Pradesh.

Delhi

- A significant breach in the Munak Canal, which supplies untreated water from Haryana to Delhi's water treatment plants, caused extensive flooding in Bawana. Officials suspect the breach, spanning nearly 40 feet, was due to erosion of the embankment's inner lining. Water Minister Atishi confirmed rapid repair efforts at the site.

Goa

- Villagers in Mirabag, Sanvordem, strongly oppose the state water resources department's plan to build a dam across their river, citing government secrecy and fears of flooding. They are resolved to resist the project.

Gujarat

- A delegation from the Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SGCCI) met with Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel to discuss pending demands related to businesses and industries in the region. Patel assured them of addressing their concerns and finding solutions.
- In the fiscal year 2023-24, Gujarat State Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation (GSHHDC), known for its Garvi Gurjari brand, reported sales of Rs 25 crore, marking a doubling from the previous year. GSHHDC procured handicrafts worth Rs 19.21 crore from 7,200 artisans within the state. Sales amounted to Rs 13 crore through its centers across Gujarat and elsewhere, and Rs 12 crore from participation in fairs and exhibitions.

Haryana

- The breach in the Munak Canal, responsible for transporting untreated water from Haryana to Delhi's water treatment plants, led to extensive flooding in Bawana. It occurred due to erosion of the embankment's inner lining, spanning about 40 feet wide. Water Minister Atishi, who visited the site, confirmed that repairs at the Bawana entry point are swiftly progressing.
- On Wednesday 10 July, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini sanctioned a budget of Rs 100 crore for the Panchkula Metropolitan Development Authority (PMDA). He instructed officials to gather details on villages that have integrated with municipal corporations and funds transferred to them, to ensure these funds are allocated for village development projects.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh won the "Best State in Food Processing Award" for its innovative food processing programmes, significantly benefiting farmers and the rural population. The award was presented by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari at the Agriculture Leadership Conclave in New Delhi.
- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu inaugurated a 5-MW solar power project in Bhanjal and a fisheries training center in Deoli, Una district. The solar project, costing Rs 31 crore and covering nine hectares, aims for completion in eight months, managed by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited.

Karnataka

- Sharan Prakash Patil, Minister of Medical Education and Skill Development, reviewed the construction of Jayadeva Hospital in Kalaburagi, planning its public opening in September. He assured that the hospital has sufficient staff and discussed potential additional appointments in upcoming meetings.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy assured on Thursday 11 July that the Vizag steel plant will not be privatized. Emphasizing the central government's responsibility to protect the plant due to its impact on livelihoods, he expressed confidence that with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's support, the plant will reach full production capacity and boost India's GDP growth.
- The Hyderabad Polo and Riding Club (HPRC) is set to unveil its new international-standard sports complex, 'Silver Spur,' this weekend. HPRC President Chaitania R. Kumar stated that the all-inclusive complex, which has been two years in the making, offers facilities on par with international standards and presents a grand look for sports enthusiasts.

Delhi

- In a positive development for the protection of the Aravalis in the National Capital Region, the Prime Minister's Office and a group of ministers led by Home Minister Amit Shah have directed the urban affairs ministry to retain the Aravalis' classification as a Natural Conservation Zone (NCZ), ensuring its protection from non-forest activities.

Goa

- Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari announced his readiness to allocate Rs 25,000-30,000 crore over the next five years for enhancing Goa's road network. Highlighting traffic issues in tourist spots like Rishikesh and Dehradun, Gadkari encouraged the Goa government to develop a comprehensive master plan focusing on transportation and pollution reduction.
- Nitin Gadkari inaugurated a six-lane elevated corridor connecting NH 66 to the Manohar International Airport, constructed at a cost of nearly Rs 1,200 crore. Commuters will be required to pay a toll to use the road, with officials estimating a reduction in travel time to the airport by approximately 15 minutes.

Gujarat

- The Gujarat High Court has issued notices to state and central authorities, including Madhya Gujarat Vij Company Ltd., following a petition challenging the mandatory installation of new prepaid smart electricity meters in Vadodara. The petitioner, Vasudev Thakkar, owns 11 power connections across 10 properties and contests the requirement.

Haryana

- The Haryana government approved a 5.5km signal-free elevated corridor from Vatika Chowk to the CPR cloverleaf, linking Dwarka Expressway with the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway at Sohna. The decision was made at the GMDA board meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini in Chandigarh. The Rs 750-crore project includes Rs 130 crore for land acquisition at Vatika Chowk and is expected to be completed within two years after the work is awarded.

Himachal Pradesh

- The procurement tender for baby care kits, each priced at about Rs 1,500, was approved at a special high-power purchase committee meeting chaired by Health and Family Welfare Minister Dhani Ram Shandil on Thursday. The government anticipates around 100,000 institutional deliveries annually and has allocated a budget of Rs 10 crore for the kits, according to an official statement.

Karnataka

- Mysuru City police are grappling with collecting Rs 203 crore in pending fines from traffic violators. They have adopted unconventional methods, such as personally visiting the homes of vehicle owners who have received more than 50 challans, to ensure payment of these fines.
- Karnataka Chief Minister K Siddaramaiah plans to propose renaming Ramnagar district to Bengaluru South in a cabinet meeting, following a request from district leaders led by DK Shivakumar. Siddaramaiah clarified that the decision rests with the cabinet after meeting with the delegation.

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Madhya Pradesh

- Three out of 125 water samples collected by the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) from various sources across the city tested positive for dangerous bacteria in laboratory tests. IMC Additional Commissioner Abhilash Mishra stated that the civic body collected approximately 170 samples overall, with reports for 125 samples received on Thursday.

Mumbai

- Juhu Beach in Mumbai recently dealt with approximately 200 Metric Tonnes of garbage, managed by 138 civic labourers as no contractor was in place for cleaning. The Solid Waste Management Department deployed workers in shifts to handle ongoing garbage clearance, addressing concerns raised by local residents about the beach's cleanliness during the monsoon season.
- Mumbai's Mahanagar Gas Ltd. has increased CNG prices by Rs 1.50 per kg and PNG prices by Rs 1 per standard cubic meter due to rising input costs, effective from July 8-9. Despite the hike, the company maintains that Mumbai's CNG and PNG rates remain competitively low compared to other parts of the country.

Pune

- Due to rising Zika virus cases in Pune, the total has now reached six, including two new cases involving pregnant women from Erandwane. Health officials have intensified inspections and sample collections in the area after several cases emerged.
- The Maharashtra Excise Department, in a joint operation with Pune police, seized 241 liters of illegal liquor worth ₹3 lakhs from L3 pub at Rainbow Hotel. Structural alterations allowing unauthorized access to licensed permit rooms prompted immediate suspension of the rooms' licenses by the Pune District Collector, with officials from the Excise Department also facing disciplinary action for negligence.

Punjab

- The Punjab Municipal Infrastructure Development Company (PMIDC) has finally issued the work order for a 24x7 canal-based water supply project. The first phase will begin with constructing a water treatment plant in Bilga village and installing connecting lines to city overhead reservoirs.
- The Punjab government's Department of Social Justice, Empowerment, and Minorities has invited applications for the chairperson of the Punjab State Scheduled Castes Commission by August 6. This initiative aims to bolster the effective implementation of welfare schemes for scheduled castes in the state.

Rajasthan

- Rajasthan's BJP government has introduced Sports Life Insurance for state athletes, offering a Rs 25 lakh cover for medal-winning athletes. Additionally, Rs 50 crore has been allocated for the Khelo Rajasthan initiative in the state's first full budget, as announced by Finance Minister Diya Kumari.
- Banswara, a tribal-dominated district in Rajasthan, has been recognized as the best performing district in the state for population stabilization efforts. This accolade was bestowed upon the district for the second time under the health department's program.

Tamil Nadu

- Shibaura Machine India (SMI), a subsidiary of Shibaura Machine, Japan, has expanded its Chennai facility with a new Rs 225 crore manufacturing unit in Chembambakkam. This expansion aims to quadruple annual production capacity from 1,200 to 4,000 high-precision injection moulding machines.

Telangana

- The Telangana government has initiated an inquiry into a software firm responsible for managing the finance department's software amid security concerns and allegations of procedural irregularities in the contract award. This follows a similar probe into another software company managing the Dharani land portal.

Uttar Pradesh

- The Yogi Adityanath government announced on Thursday that over 50 check gates in 25 districts are now using AI and IoT technology to curb illegal mining in Uttar Pradesh. These unmanned check gates, located at 55 sites, are part of a broader effort to regulate mining activity in one of the state's most exploited sectors.
- The Gautam Buddha Nagar Police Commissionerate secured the top position among all commissionerates and districts in Uttar Pradesh on the Chief Minister's Darpan Dashboard, earning an A+ ranking.

Madhya Pradesh

- The railways are seeking 428 hectares of forest land in Indore and Khargone for the Ratlam-Khandwa gauge conversion project, specifically the Patalpani to Mukhtiyara stretch. This initiative, beneficial for passengers, anticipates a substantial impact on the environment, including the expected loss of over 100,000 trees in the Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, Choral, and Barwaha forest areas due to deforestation.
- The Mahakal Mandir Management Committee announced plans on Thursday to construct a ropeway linking the Jyotirlinga temple with Ujjain railway station. Spanning 1851 sq meters on committee-owned land, the ropeway aims to alleviate traffic issues on the chaotic 2km road journey, despite the temple being only 1.2km aerially from Ujjain junction.

Mumbai

- The BMC has opened a 3.5 km stretch of Mumbai's north-bound Mumbai Coastal Road from Haji Ali to Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road in Worli, operational on weekdays from 7 am to 11 pm. Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde inspected the area, noting the project's 91 percent completion and urging expedited finalization.
- The Maharashtra legislative council unanimously approved a resolution to rename seven Mumbai local train stations, reflecting a shift from colonial-era names to culturally significant ones. Stations like Currey Road will be known as Lalbaug, Sandhurst Road as Dongri, and Marine Lines as Mumbadevi, among others, in line with efforts to embrace indigenous nomenclature for public spaces.

Pune

- Collector Suhas Divase has directed officials in Pune district to survey Western Ghats areas like Maval, Mulshi, and Junnar for safety risks at popular tourist spots during the monsoon season. Measures include installing warning signs, deploying rescue resources, and restricting access to hazardous areas after 6 p.m.
- The state government appointed an eight-member expert committee to create a blueprint for a comprehensive review of the flood line demarcation in the city. This follows the Bombay High Court's directive for the state irrigation department to conduct the demarcation study and submit the report to the additional chief secretary or principal secretary of the water resources department.

Punjab

- The Punjab government plans to distribute 22,000 crop residue management machines with subsidies to curb farm fires. Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian aims for a draw this month and subsidy release by August to aid farmers ahead of the paddy harvest.

Rajasthan

- Udaipur is preparing to receive a pair of lions from Sakkarbaug Zoological Park in Junagadh, Gujarat, by the end of July as part of an animal exchange program. The forest department is in the process of finalizing the arrival date in an upcoming meeting. The lions will be housed in the new lion safari area being developed at Sajjangarh Biological Park.

Tamil Nadu

- The Tamil Nadu government has directed the release of water from Bhavanisagar dam into Thadepalli-Arakkan Kottai and Kalingarayan canals for 120 days, starting Friday. This move aims to benefit over 40,000 acres of agricultural land in various unions across Erode and Gobichettipalayam.
- The Tamil Nadu government has directed the WRD to release water from Bhavanisagar dam to Thadepalli-Arakkan Kottai and Kalingarayan canals for 120 days, starting Friday 12 July. This move aims to benefit 40,247 acres of land across various unions.

Telangana

- The Telangana government's IT department is collaborating with the non-profit Swecha to develop a Telugu AI chatbot similar to ChatGPT. This initiative involves nearly one lakh students collecting data from locals on topics like regional culture and farming.
- Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy and Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu met in Hyderabad to resolve pending issues between the two states through discussions. They agreed to form two high-level joint committees, one led by chief secretaries and another by ministers from both states.

Uttar Pradesh

- The department of geography at AMU, in collaboration with NRSC-ISRO, launched a GPS-aided Radiosonde Weather Balloon for weather monitoring. This launch, marking the department's centenary celebration, aims to improve local weather forecasting using advanced technology.

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

- China criticized the European Union for its statement on the South China Sea, accusing it of disregarding historical facts and supporting what China views as the Philippines' violation of its sovereignty. The EU's statement marked the anniversary of an arbitration ruling favoring the Philippines, which China rejected, leading to strong objections and representations from China to the EU, urging fairness and respect for regional peace efforts.
- Taiwan expressed heightened concern over the Chinese military's escalating presence near the island, noting a significant increase in activity amid joint exercises involving China's Shandong aircraft carrier in the Pacific. The developments coincide with a NATO summit discussing China's role in supporting Russia's actions in Ukraine and its broader security challenges to Europe. Taiwan's defense ministry reported detecting 66 Chinese military aircraft in the vicinity over the past 24 hours.

Europe

- Spain's far-right Vox party, led by Santiago Abascal, announced it is withdrawing from coalition governments in five regions with the centre-right People's Party (PP) due to disagreements over migration policy. This decision follows the PP's support for relocating under-18 migrants from the Canary Islands to the Spanish mainland, amid a significant increase in migrant arrivals to the islands.

Middle East

- Turkish President Erdogan stated at the NATO summit that NATO's partnership with Israel hinges on achieving lasting peace in Palestine. He also announced diplomatic efforts to mediate in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and plans to restore relations with Syria, along with progress on resolving F-16 sales with assurances from President Biden.
- The G7 foreign ministers criticized Israel's recent expansion of settlements in the occupied West Bank as detrimental to peace efforts, urging Israel to reverse its decision. They reaffirmed support for a two-State solution and called for the release of withheld tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority to maintain economic stability, crucial for regional security.
- As of 11 July, Israel intensified airstrikes on Gaza City in what residents described as one of the war's most intense weeks, resulting in casualties and widespread destruction. Peace talks mediated by Qatar and Egypt ended without agreement, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hamas of making demands that hindered a potential framework deal, though specifics were not disclosed.

Pakistan

- Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled that Imran Khan's PTI party is eligible for over 20 extra reserved seats in the national legislature, increasing pressure on the coalition government. The PTI candidates contested as independents in the February 8 election and were previously ineligible for the reserved seats, which will now be granted to PTI.
- The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) resumed trading on Monday 08 July after a two-hour suspension due to a fire at its Karachi headquarters. The KSE 100 index rose by 0.3%, or about 260 points, following the resumption, continuing its recent trend of surpassing 80,000 points driven by an IMF bailout and ongoing reforms.

United Kingdom

- Britain's economy is gaining momentum under Prime Minister Keir Starmer's new government, but robust growth figures haven't eased concerns over public spending constraints. Starmer faces ongoing challenges despite the economic recovery, highlighting the complexities of managing fiscal policies amidst rebounding economic indicators.
- Following a historic election loss, British opposition leader Rishi Sunak appointed a new shadow cabinet, retaining senior ministers like Jeremy Hunt while former Foreign Secretary David Cameron resigned. The Conservative Party's defeat led to Sunak taking responsibility, with Labour's Keir Starmer becoming the new Prime Minister. Conservative Party Chair Richard Holden also resigned, calling for a review of their election campaign strategy.

United States

- Arkansas' Secretary of State rejected petitions for an abortion rights measure due to missing paperwork on paid canvassers and signature gathering rules, despite organizers disputing the decision and resubmitting documentation. The measure failed to meet signature requirements largely due to insufficient signatures collected by unpaid volunteers.
- About 1 million homes and businesses in Texas remained without power on Thursday 11 July, four days after Hurricane Beryl hit with strong winds and flooding. CenterPoint Energy reported restoring power to over half of its customers, but delays persist in areas like Freeport, impacting energy operations despite most oil and gas companies returning to normal after the storm.

Upcoming News/Events**China**

- China's upcoming plenum aims to boost economic confidence but faces challenges due to conflicting goals like growth stimulation and debt reduction, potentially limiting substantial policy advancements.
- Taiwan's Culture Ministry will remove military honor guards from Chiang Kai-shek's memorial hall to reduce the glorification of authoritarianism. Chiang, once revered for anti-communist efforts, is now controversial for his repressive rule, with the change effective next Monday in Taipei.
- China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao pledged to strengthen development strategies and boost trade and investment ties with Saudi Arabia. Discussions emphasized cooperation in infrastructure, energy, green development, and digital economy sectors, welcoming Saudi entities like Aramco to deepen their presence in China.

Europe

- Ukraine urged NATO to lift weapon use restrictions against Russia, calling it pivotal, while China criticized NATO's bias over its support for Moscow. NATO promised more aid to Ukraine and affirmed support for its NATO membership, with Biden's slip-up referring to Zelensky as "Putin" potentially impacting his political future.
- Finland's parliament is voting on a bill to empower border guards to turn back asylum seekers from Russia, citing a surge in arrivals and allegations of Russian manipulation amid tensions over NATO alignment. Despite criticism for potential human rights breaches, the bill has bipartisan support to prevent further crossings after Finland closed its border last year.

Middle East

- Israeli and Egyptian negotiators are discussing the implementation of an electronic surveillance system along the Gaza-Egypt border. This system could potentially facilitate an Israeli troop withdrawal from the area contingent upon reaching a ceasefire agreement, as reported by Egyptian sources familiar with the discussions.
- Iran's acting foreign minister stated that indirect nuclear negotiations with the United States are continuing via Oman, emphasizing confidentiality. President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian plans to pursue a pragmatic foreign policy, aiming to ease tensions and revive stalled nuclear talks with international powers.
- Saudi Arabia's defense ministry announced a deal to purchase four Airbus A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft, enhancing the Royal Saudi Air Force's (RSAF) air-to-air refueling and transport capabilities. Airbus noted the agreement includes technology transfer, logistics support, spare parts, training, and service support, with the first new aircraft expected to join RSAF's fleet in 2027, marking Saudi Arabia as one of the largest operators of the A330 MRTT.

Pakistan

- Pakistan has authorized its army-run spy agency, ISI, to tap telephone calls and messages, raising concerns over potential misuse and privacy violations. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar assured that the measure is intended to track criminal and terrorist activities and will be monitored to prevent infringement on privacy.
- Pakistan will extend expired registration cards for 1.5 million Afghan refugees for one year, as announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. While the extension of the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, now valid until June 30, 2025, was granted, it remains unclear if this will protect holders from future deportations, as the repatriation plan will continue.

United Kingdom

- British PM Keir Starmer urged NATO allies to increase defense spending to safeguard alliance values in a "new and dangerous era," aiming for a 2.5% GDP target without setting a timeline. He praised U.S. President Biden's leadership at the NATO summit but avoided commenting on Biden's fitness for re-election after a recent naming error.
- Britain is projected to see a 17% decline in its number of U.S. dollar millionaires by 2028, down to 2,542,464 from 3,061,553 in the previous year, according to the UBS Global Wealth Report for 2024. The report attributes this shift partly to the country's high millionaire count and changes like scrapping its "non-dom" tax status, while noting growth in millionaire numbers in the United States and Taiwan due to favorable tax policies in other global destinations like Dubai and Singapore.

United States

- The United States and Canada have agreed in principle to modernize the 60-year-old Columbia River treaty, aiming to address climate changes and community needs. The amendments will prioritize indigenous voices, enhance flood control, and promote clean energy goals, focusing on balancing energy coordination between the two countries.
- Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin issued an executive order to limit or ban cell phone use for 1.2 million public school students, citing mental health and academic concerns. The order mandates the creation of procedures to restrict phone use during instructional time, with exceptions for necessary communication and emergencies.

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