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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- The Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirumala, the world's richest Hindu temple, collected Rs. 125.35 crore in July. TTD officials reported 22.13 lakh devotees visited, 1.04 crore laddus were distributed, and 8.67 lakh devotees tonsured their heads as part of their vows.

Delhi

- The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has sealed over 65 coaching centers and libraries operating illegally in basements. This action follows the drowning of three civil service aspirants in the basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle in Old Rajender Nagar, leading to the closure of 23 centers in the west zone, 8 in the central zone, and 3 in the Najafgarh zone.
- The torrential downpour led to chaos, flooding the PCR control room with around 3,000 traffic congestion calls. On Wednesday 31 July alone, 2,727 calls were received, and 218 more came in between midnight and 7 am on Thursday 1 August, as countless commuters were trapped in gridlocks across the city.

Goa

- The relentless rain on Thursday 1 August, inundated the state, reminiscent of the August 2019 floods that devastated Bicholim. While the downpours paralyzed the state, with the IMD issuing a red alert, Bicholim and Valpoi were hardest hit, cutting off villages in Bicholim, Valpoi, Ponda, and Pernem due to dangerously rising water levels.

Gujarat

- Despite July's bountiful showers reducing Gujarat's overall rainfall deficit, Ahmedabad still has an 8% deficit compared to normal. Kutch and Saurashtra have received over 75% of the season's rainfall, with three districts already exceeding 100%.
- The Gujarat government has amended the Prohibition Act through an ordinance, allowing the auction of vehicles seized for transporting liquor and other intoxicants before a court's final order. Although the draft bill for this amendment was submitted during the budget session of the assembly earlier this year, it was not tabled.

Haryana

- The MCG issued 710 challans and imposed Rs 4 lakh in fines for illegal roadside garbage dumping last month. Most were issued to shop owners and street vendors, with MCG commissioner Narhari Singh Banger urging them to maintain cleanliness.
- Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini announced that after granting reservations to BC-A in local bodies and PRIs, the government is now considering reservations for BC-B. He shared this after receiving a supplementary report on reservation proportions for BC-B in urban local bodies and PRIs from Haryana Backward Commission Chairman Darshan Singh.
- CM Nayab Saini has approved changes to the policy for awarding prizes to teachers in state universities, government colleges, and aided private colleges. The service requirement for eligibility has been reduced from 15 to 10 years, allowing newer teachers to be recognized.

Himachal Pradesh

- Cloudbursts in Mandi, Shimla, and Kullu districts have left about 50 people missing, with five bodies recovered. The IMD has issued a 'red' alert for Kangra, Kullu, and Mandi due to expected heavy rainfall, and an orange alert for Kangra specifically, with warnings extending to Sirmaur, Solan, Mandi, and Shimla.

Karnataka

- Recent massive landslides in Shirur, Uttara Kannada, and Wayanad, Kerala, along with minor landslides in the Western Ghats, have alarmed the Karnataka government. The Karnataka Forest Minister has mandated the closure of illegal activities like forest encroachment and unauthorized developments within a month and has initiated legal action to address these threats to the region's ecosystem.
- Chief Minister M.K. Stalin praised the Supreme Court's ruling affirming that states can sub-classify SC/STs for internal quotas, highlighting it as a validation of the DMK's Dravidian model for social justice. The court upheld the DMK law granting a 3% internal quota for Arunthathiyars within the SC category.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- Tirupati district collector S Venkateswar toured Srikalahasti and Venkatagiri constituencies on Friday 02 August, visiting the Merlapaka lift and Althurupadu reservoir, part of the Somasila-Swarnamukhi link canal. Once completed, the Althurupadu reservoir will irrigate 90,000 acres of farmland and provide water for 2.50 lakh residents.
- A CSTEP study warns that about 1% of Visakhapatnam could be submerged by 2040 due to rising sea levels. Historical data (1992-2021) shows a 0.181 cm annual sea level increase, totaling 2.38 cm over two decades. If sea levels rise by 16.7-18.3 cm by 2040, around 7 sq km of the city could be inundated.

Delhi

- Mayor Shelly Oberoi announced plans to use ₹500 crore from the mayor's corpus to upgrade or replace Delhi's aging drainage system, following a ward-wise survey. This initiative aims to address waterlogging and prevent rain-related incidents, with officials instructed to list and estimate costs for necessary drain improvements.

Goa

- The Goa legislative assembly passed The Goa Escheats, Forfeiture, and Bona Vacantia Bill, 2024, allowing the government to take over land with unclear ownership or no heirs. Additionally, a bill was introduced to finalize permissions by the Chief Town Planner for land development in Candolim-Calangute and Arpora-Parra-Verla. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant agreed to amend the escheats bill, extending the notice period for claimants from three months to one year.

Gujarat

- The Gujarat high court on Thursday criticized the state government and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) for inadequate efforts to resolve traffic and parking issues, insisting on a 24x7, year-round traffic drive. During a contempt of court plea hearing on city road conditions, traffic, parking issues, and stray cattle menace, Justices A Y Kogje and Samir Dave criticized the short-term traffic police drives, emphasizing the need for continuous enforcement.

Haryana

- The Supreme Court directed the Haryana and Punjab governments to propose common names for a committee to engage with protesting farmers at the Shambhu border and resolve their demands to unblock the national highway. The court also maintained its earlier order of status quo on the Shambhu border, where farmers have been camping since February 13.
- The Haryana Public Service Commission (HPSC) announced the recruitment of 2424 Assistant Professors for various subjects in the Higher Education Department. The official notification was published on August 2, 2024, and the online application process will begin on August 7, 2024, at regn.hpssc.gov.in or hpssc.gov.in.

Himachal Pradesh

- The meteorological office has issued a 'yellow' alert for heavy rain, thunderstorms, and lightning in ten districts of Himachal Pradesh until August 6. Heavy rains have closed 115 roads and affected 225 transformers and 111 water supply schemes, with 77 lives lost and damages estimated at Rs 655 crore since June 27.
- Congress leader Pramod Tiwari urged the central government in the Rajya Sabha to provide bipartisan financial assistance to Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Cloudbursts and flooding have claimed nearly 20 lives in Himachal Pradesh and 16 in Uttarakhand, with numerous roads, including three national highways, closed and many still missing.

Karnataka

- The Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation will spend Rs 90 lakh to repair all nine Indira Canteens ahead of a new menu launch. The state government has allocated Rs 45 lakh, with HDMC funding the rest. Repairs will cover various aspects, including waterproofing, plumbing, and electrical work.

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Madhya Pradesh

- This month, the Madhya Pradesh government announced a Rs 250 Rakhi gift for 1.30 crore women beneficiaries of the Ladli Behna scheme, in addition to the existing Rs 1250 per month. However, there are no plans to further increase the monthly amount. The additional Rakhi gift will cost the government around Rs 325 crore.
- The Madhya Pradesh High Court denied protection to two NHAI officials from prosecution for poor road maintenance, as they failed to repair roads or manage traffic to prevent accidents. The officials sought to quash an FIR filed after a motorcyclist was injured on the pothole-riddled NH-7.

Mumbai

- As of 3rd August, A truck carrying hydrogen gas cylinders overturned and caught fire on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway, causing multiple explosions and significant traffic jams. Authorities have diverted traffic via Bhiwandi to manage the roadblock near Vasai. Heavy monsoon rains have worsened conditions with potholes and waterlogging, making travel difficult on the highway.

Pune

- The Centre has approved eight National High-Speed Road Corridor projects totaling 936 km at a cost of Rs 50,655 crore to improve logistics, reduce congestion, and enhance connectivity. Among these, the Nashik Phata-Khed project near Pune will be an 8-lane elevated corridor built at a cost of Rs 7,827 crore.
- The IMD has issued a yellow alert for Pune due to expected heavy rainfall over the coming week. Rising water levels in rivers have already led to casualties, including three deaths from electrocution related to the Mutha River. The forecast includes a cloudy sky with moderate rain and fluctuating temperatures.

Punjab

- Heavy rainfall in Punjab and Haryana on Thursday 1 August brought relief from humidity, causing minimum temperatures to drop by 2-4 degrees below normal. Significant rainfall was reported in Moga, Tarn Taran, Bathinda, Ferozepur, Faridkot, and Ambala, leading to waterlogging in Bathinda, Faridkot, and Moga districts.

Rajasthan

- The Supreme Court accepted the Rajasthan government's special leave petition (SLP) challenging the acquittal of four individuals in the 2008 Jaipur bomb blast case. The case is now listed before the bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Arvind Kumar. This SLP adds to a previous petition filed by the state government and another by a blast victim.

Tamil Nadu

- Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) services have been cancelled until August 6 due to landslides between Kallar and Coonoor. The Southern Railways' Salem division announced that the Mettupalayam-Ooty-Mettupalayam trains will remain suspended due to ongoing restoration challenges and weather conditions.

Telangana

- The latest Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report on Telangana's medicine supplies for 2021-22 highlighted serious issues, including lapses in maintenance and drug supply, a 45% deficit in healthcare staff, expired drugs being supplied, lack of quality checks, and no action against faulty suppliers. The report was tabled in the assembly on Friday 2 August.
- Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy announced that restaurants and eating joints in Greater Hyderabad can stay open until 1 am, while liquor shops must close by 11 pm. This decision follows a meeting with the police commissioners of Hyderabad, Cyberabad, and Rachakonda, aimed at supporting sustainable urban development in the city.

Uttar Pradesh

- In Varanasi, 332 students have enrolled in the fourth batch of the Chief Minister Abhyudaya Scheme, managed by the Social Welfare Department. Of these, 152 are preparing for the UPSC, and 180 are preparing for NEET and JEE, using both offline and online methods.
- The Uttar Pradesh Nazul Property (Management and Use for Public Purposes) Bill, 2024, passed by the state assembly, was sent to the select committee after being tabled in the upper house. Some BJP legislators, having expressed concerns about the bill, met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday evening 31 July.

Madhya Pradesh

- The Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission (MPPSC) has started recruiting for 1,085 specialist doctor positions in the public health and medical education department. The interview-based selection process includes 239 medical specialists, 38 radiologists, 207 gynecologists, 159 pediatricians, 267 surgeons, and 175 anesthesiologists.
- On Friday, August 2, Indore recorded 9 mm of rainfall by 11:30 pm. The Meteorological Department had issued a heavy rainfall warning for various parts of Indore and Ujjain divisions, including districts such as Shajapur, Mandsaur, Neemuch, Alirajpur, Jhabua, Barwani, Khargone, Khandwa, and Burhanpur, due to a strong weather system.

Mumbai

- The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, India's longest greenfield expressway, is set to be completed by October 2025, with 82% of the 1,386 km project finished as of June 2024. This expressway will reduce the distance to Mumbai's Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust by 180 km and cut travel time by up to 50%, enhancing connectivity across multiple states.
- The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) plans to evict illegal occupants from 1,336 tenements in Kurla, meant for slum dwellers, and demands over Rs 35 crore in rental arrears within a month. Police protection has been requested from October 7 to 10 for the eviction process, with notices issued to HDIL's resolution professional to surrender the units.

Pune

- The Pune civic body plans to repair 15 flyovers damaged by rain with a budget of Rs 4.42 crore. A proposal has been submitted to the standing committee, noting that the defect liability period has expired for these flyovers, which include key bridges like Baba Rao Bhide Bridge, Aga Khan Bridge, and Alankar Talkies Railway Flyover.

Punjab

- Work on four bridges over the Sidhwan Canal in Ludhiana will resume in October after the canal is closed for 31 days. MP Sanjeev Arora announced that the canal will be shut from October 12 to November 11 for construction and cleaning, as per a notification from the Punjab Department of Water Resources.

Rajasthan

- Rajasthan Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited (RRVUNL) is set to open a new 1,760-hectare captive coal mine with an annual production capacity of 11 million tonnes in Kente Extension, Udaipur block, Surguja district, North Chhattisgarh. The project also includes a state-of-the-art coal washery, following the completion of a public hearing by the Environmental Protection Board.

Tamil Nadu

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced that the state government will cover higher educational expenses for students from state government schools admitted to prestigious institutions in India and abroad. Additionally, the government will pay the initial travel costs for students studying abroad. A total of 447 students have been admitted to institutions, including IITs, NITs, and overseas universities in Japan, Malaysia, and Taiwan.
- At least three private medical colleges, a deemed university, a state private university, and a self-financing medical college in Tamil Nadu are expected to start MBBS courses this year, each with 150 seats. The National Medical Commission (NMC) has not yet released the total number of approved medical colleges for the year.

Telangana

- Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy announced that the BCCI will build a world-class cricket stadium on the outskirts of Hyderabad. Preliminary talks between the state government and BCCI have been completed, with plans for one of the best international cricket stadiums underway.

Uttar Pradesh

- The Uttar Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority, in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority, is conducting the 'Aapda Mitra' training program from August 3 to August 14. The 12-day program will train 100 home guards from Kanpur district in disaster management, facilitated by the State Disaster Response Force, Lucknow.

GLOBAL UPDATE**Highlights of this week****Upcoming News/Events****Africa**

- A beach attack in Somalia on August 3, 2024, resulted in the deaths of 37 civilians, marking the deadliest incident in the country since the 2022 twin car bombings that killed at least 100 people.
- In Abuja, Nigeria, police arrested dozens and used teargas to disperse protesters on the third day of demonstrations over the cost of living crisis. At least one person was shot in Kano, and protests have resulted in at least 13 deaths, with police denying responsibility. Nearly 700 people have been arrested, and nine officers have been injured.

America

- Canada and the U.S. have completed negotiations for an agreement enabling the use of American space launch technology and expertise in Canada. This deal aims to enhance Canada's position as a leader in commercial space launches. Final reviews and domestic authorizations are the next steps before the agreement is signed.

China

- Zheng Qinwen became the first Chinese player to win an Olympic tennis singles gold medal by defeating Croatia's Donna Vekic 6-2, 6-3 in the final.
- Mega-cities on China's eastern coast are experiencing another heatwave with temperatures around 40°C (104°F) on Friday 2 August, expected to continue into next week. Shanghai issued its first red warning for high temperatures this year after hitting 40°C, marking the 22nd day over 40°C since 1873.
- Floods and mudslides in Sichuan, China, destroyed village homes and part of a highway on Saturday 3 August, killing at least two people and leaving 17 missing. In Kangding, mudslides caused by overnight rains took down homes, resulting in two deaths and 12 missing, according to CCTV.

Europe

- A Russian drone attack overnight damaged critical infrastructure in Vinnytsia, Ukraine. The Ukrainian air force shot down 24 of the 29 drones, while additional missile attacks also targeted the region.
- Spain saw a 13% increase in foreign tourists in the first half of 2024, with 42.5 million visitors, setting the country on track for another record year. Despite this, growing discontent over tourism's impact on local housing and infrastructure has led to protests in popular destinations.

Middle East

- An Israeli airstrike on a school sheltering displaced persons in Gaza City killed at least 15 Palestinians. Earlier, two airstrikes in the West Bank killed nine militants, including a local Hamas commander, in what Israel described as counter-terrorism operations.
- Turkey has blocked access to Instagram, citing the platform's failure to comply with the country's laws and regulations. This decision follows accusations that Instagram blocked condolence posts related to a recent incident, according to a Turkish government minister.

Pakistan

- On Friday 02 August, unknown assailants attacked police officers escorting a vehicle with three judges in Dera Ismail Khan, northwest Pakistan, killing two officers. The judges were unharmed in this second such incident in the region within a week.
- The Pakistani passport has cemented its spot as the world's fourth worst, languishing at 100th place for an unprecedented fourth consecutive year. With access to just 33 countries without a visa, it offers a highly limited global reach. This passport's dismal standing underscores significant travel restrictions for its holders.

United Kingdom

- In Sunderland, protesters clashed with police, set vehicles on fire, and vandalized property following the recent killing of three children in Southport. Violence erupted as anti-immigrant demonstrators attacked police and started fires near a mosque, leading to hospitalizations of three officers and eight arrests for violent disorder and burglary.
- Britain's Bryony Page won gold in the women's trampoline at the Paris Games, clinching her first Olympic gold after previous silver and bronze medals. Belarusian Vityaeva Bardzilouskaya took silver, and Canada's Sophiane Methot won bronze.

United States

- Hawaiian Electric has agreed to pay approximately \$1.99 billion as part of a \$4 billion legal settlement to compensate victims of the deadly Maui wildfires from August 2023. The settlement, reached after four months of mediation, includes funds for survivors.
- The Biden administration has temporarily paused a humanitarian program that permits up to 30,000 people from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to enter the U.S. each month, while it reviews the vetting and screening processes for sponsor applications.

Africa

- Ethiopia is set to secure \$4.9 billion in debt relief through a long-awaited restructuring, with deals expected to be finalized in the coming months. The country, which defaulted on its debt in late 2023, plans to use the savings to address its \$28.38 billion external debt, including \$200 million from restructuring a \$1 billion Eurobond.

America

- Diplomats from Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico are urging Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to engage with the opposition candidate following last week's contested election. Western governments are increasingly rejecting Maduro's declared victory, pushing for a resolution to the dispute.
- The Panama Canal will boost daily transit slots from 34 to 36 starting in September, as improved rainfall allows it to ease previous drought restrictions. This increase comes after a challenging 2023, when water levels forced limits on the number of vessels.

China

- China's state council expects the urbanization rate of its permanent population to reach nearly 70% within the next five years, up from 66.16% at the end of 2023. A five-year action plan aims to unlock domestic demand potential through urbanization and grant urban residency to rural migrants, according to Xinhua.
- President Xi Jinping has called for strengthening China's border, sea, and air defenses to protect sovereignty and maritime interests. This comes after appointing a new head for the armed forces overseeing missiles ahead of the People's Liberation Army's 96th anniversary.

Europe

- Russian assaults on the strategic eastern logistics hub of Pokrovsk have intensified, leading to significant territorial gains and a tenfold increase in evacuation requests. In the Donetsk region, Russia has gained around 57 square km in a week, marking some of the largest advances since April.

Middle East

- The U.S. will deploy additional fighter jets and Navy warships to the Middle East to enhance defenses amid heightened tensions with Iran and its allies, including Hamas and Hezbollah. The deployment includes more Navy cruisers and destroyers capable of intercepting ballistic missiles, as well as an additional fighter jet squadron to bolster U.S. and Israeli security.
- Air France and its affiliate Transavia have extended their suspension of flights between Paris and Beirut until at least August 6 due to rising regional tensions. This decision follows increased avoidance of Iranian and Lebanese airspace and cancellations of flights to Israel and Lebanon amid concerns over potential regional conflict.

Pakistan

- Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has requested China to re-profile Pakistan's debt to facilitate an IMF bailout of \$7 billion. The request includes converting coal projects to use local resources and restructuring over \$15 billion in energy sector debts to address repayment challenges.
- The Pakistani government is preparing to launch "Beep Pakistan," a new communication app for federal officials and employees. State Minister Shaza Fatima Khwaja urged not to compare it to WhatsApp, noting that it is currently in trial runs within the ministry and will soon expand to other departments.

United Kingdom

- Britain's financial watchdog announced that it will expand the scope of "dormant" assets, aiming to release an additional £880 million (\$1.12 billion) for social and environmental projects. This includes funds from accounts inactive for over 15 years, contributing to the UK Dormant Assets Scheme which has already channeled £745 million into various initiatives since 2011.
- British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has warned social media companies to enforce laws against incitement to violence following misinformation about a fatal stabbing in Southport. The false claims that the suspect was a radical Islamist migrant fueled violent anti-immigrant protests, leading to attacks on police and a mosque. Starmer condemned the unrest as criminal disorder driven by far-right hatred.

United States

- Florida is bracing for a "broad, sloppy" weather system that could develop into a tropical storm this weekend, bringing up to a foot of rain and winds exceeding 70 mph. A tropical storm warning is in effect from southern Florida to Fort Myers, with potential ocean surges and emergency orders in place as the system moves toward the Gulf Coast.
- The U.S. Justice Department has launched its first whistleblower program offering monetary rewards for reporting corporate misconduct. Designed to uncover unreported criminal activity, the program allows whistleblowers to receive a portion of the assets forfeited if their information leads to prosecution.

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