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Our Head Office : 110/1A & 110/2B, Ansec House, Tank Road, Yerwada, Pune, Maharashtra - 411006

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- State Minister for Industries, Commerce, and Food Processing, TG Bharat, has pledged to revive the Orvakal industrial hub, which was neglected during the YSRCP regime. During a visit to the deserted hub, accompanied by Panyam MLA Gouru Charitha Reddy, the minister criticized the lack of attention it received over the past five years under the YSR Congress's leadership.

Delhi

- Delhi Police's Special Cell arrested "most wanted" terror operative Rizwan Ali at the Delhi-Faridabad border after an eight-month chase across six cities. Rizwan, part of an "ISIS-inspired" module busted last year, had been preparing IEDs and planning terror attacks around Independence Day. He had been absconding for over a year.

Goa

- The state government has announced an immediate ban on the production, sale, and use of hazardous kite-flying threads, including the "Chinese thread" or "manja." The new regulations prohibit the use of kite-flying threads made from nylon, plastic, and other synthetic materials, especially those coated with glass or metal, due to the associated risks.
- The Goa TCP department has changed the zoning of nine plots to settlement zones following a debate on land conversion issues. The update aims to correct inadvertent errors and inconsistencies in the Regional Plan of Goa 2021.

Gujarat

- Gujarat's Gir, home to the largest population of Asiatic lions, has achieved remarkable conservation success, with the lion population growing from 177 to 674 and their habitat expanding across 10 districts. The region not only celebrates this success but also honors lions through rituals and memorials; recently, the passing of Bhagat, a beloved lion, was marked by a community prayer meeting and a memorial in Rajula.
- Ahead of the festive season, Vadodara Municipal Corporation's food safety department has instructed city food vendors, especially those selling sweets, to use only natural colors. The department held a meeting on Friday 09 August, to discuss safety measures for sweets and savories during Raksha Bandhan, Janmashtami, and Ganpati festivals.

Haryana

- Traffic authorities have identified 18 accident-prone spots in the city, with three new blackspots on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway (DME) near Udyog Kunj toll, Rasoolpur Sikroda, and the aeroplane restaurant. Other problematic areas include three spots on NH-9, five on state highways, and seven on internal roads, with Masuri being a significant concern due to several accident-prone locations.
- On Wednesday 07 August, the state-level sanctioning committee for 'Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana' (RKVY) and 'Krishonnati Yojana', led by Chief Secretary T.V.S.N. Prasad, approved the annual action plan for 2024-25. The plan allocates ₹1,198.27 crore to boost agricultural productivity, support sustainable farming, and improve farmer livelihoods through infrastructure and value addition investments.

Himachal Pradesh

- The death toll from flash floods caused by cloudbursts in Himachal Pradesh has risen to 15, with about 40 people still missing. Rescue operations, led by the NDRF, are ongoing in affected areas, including Shimla and Mandi districts, where cloudbursts on July 31 caused significant damage. The worst-hit area is Samej village, where over 30 people are reported missing.

Karnataka

- Karnataka has achieved 60% progress in linking Aadhaar with 4.05 crore agricultural land parcels, covering 2.46 crore parcels so far. The newly established revenue commissionerate is handling the linkage, but formal establishment of the commissionerate awaits gubernatorial consent. Efforts are ongoing to reach the remaining 1.6 crore land parcel owners through village accountants.
- Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) won seven awards at the Airport Food & Beverage (FAB) + Hospitality Conference and Awards in Ontario, California. It is the first Indian airport to achieve such a broad range of accolades at this prestigious event.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- In response to complaints about land grabbing and illegal conversions during the previous YSRCP regime, the state government has decided to launch a comprehensive investigation into these irregularities. All land registrations involving properties under Section 22-A (prohibitory lists) and assigned lands will be suspended until the probe is completed.

Delhi

- Buses will be restricted from using the Noida Expressway carriageway leading to Pari Chowk during evening rush hours from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, due to heavy office traffic causing bottlenecks. This decision, made in a meeting with bus association representatives, will not affect vehicles on the carriageway leading to Delhi.
- A 2.5-km section from Janakpuri West to Krishna Park Extension on the Janakpuri West-RK Ashram Marg Metro corridor of Phase-IV is set to open by the end of the month. Vikas Kumar, DMRC Managing Director, confirmed the inspection, noting that this will be the first section to open in Phase IV.

Goa

- Calangute MLA Michael Lobo has requested land from the comunidades of Calangute, Saligao, Guirim, and Parra to erect towers for electricity lines that will connect to a new 200/33 KV substation at Saligao. He highlighted frequent power outages in the Calangute-Candolim area due to overloaded substations and stressed that acquiring land for these towers is essential for improving the power supply.
- Chief Minister Pramod Sawant announced that the government is demolishing 110 unsafe buildings in Goa and is empaneling contractors for urgent repairs of dilapidated government structures. A provision of Rs 600 crore has been allocated for repairs, maintenance, and construction of buildings.

Gujarat

- The Gujarat High Court has issued show-cause notices to state forest and railway authorities for failing to implement court-ordered measures designed to protect Asiatic lions from train collisions near the Gir sanctuary.

Haryana

- The Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC) has announced the recruitment of 1,456 Junior Basic Training (JBT) Teachers for 2024, available in the Mewad Cadre (Group C Services). The selection will be based on a written exam, with online applications starting August 12, 2024.
- The Haryana government has added nine more services under the Haryana Right to Service Act, 2014, to improve service delivery efficiency. The new services, including updates to names, marital status, and contact information in plot memos, must be processed within five days, according to a notification issued by Chief Secretary TVSN Prasad.

Himachal Pradesh

- Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has reformed the Annual Performance Appraisal Report (APAR) system for IAS and HPPSC officers in Himachal Pradesh. The new system replaces traditional descriptive ratings with a numerical grading scale, focusing on annual work plan achievements, work-related attributes, and personal qualities. Officers may also face negative marking for non-compliance with government orders, with performance evaluated on a scale of 1-10.

Karnataka

- The Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation (HDMC) plans to auction its stalls and increase property taxes by 3% to boost funds, facing challenges with tax arrears and subletting issues. The revision follows decades of stagnant stall rents, which led to significant discrepancies between the rent paid and the sublet value.
- Dakshina Kannada police are intensifying efforts to combat cybercrime, with initiatives including social media awareness campaigns, educational visits to schools and colleges, and upcoming market meetings. SP Yathish N highlighted recent incidents where victims lost Rs 12 lakh to scams, emphasizing the need for widespread public education on cyber threats.

INDIA UPDATE**Highlights of this week****Madhya Pradesh**

- Shri Govindram Seksaria Institute of Technology and Science (SGSITS) has received AICTE approval to implement the Quality Improvement Program (QIP). This initiative aims to enhance the qualifications of teachers at AICTE-approved institutions nationwide.
- The Madhya Pradesh Government has announced a reward of Rs 1 crore for Vivek Sagar Prasad, a member of the Indian men's hockey team that won bronze at the Paris Olympics. India achieved this milestone by defeating Spain 2-1, marking their second consecutive Olympic bronze in hockey. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav congratulated Prasad, a native of the state.

Mumbai

- Mumbai Traffic Police will implement new temporary traffic diversions in the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) starting August 8 to address congestion issues. This decision follows a meeting with diamond merchants at the Bharat Diamond Bourse, aiming to improve traffic flow. The duration of these diversions has not yet been specified.
- Local train services on the Central line were disrupted on Wednesday 07 August, due to a boulder falling between Asangaon and Adgaon stations, affecting the Kalyan-Kasara section. While the downline is operational, the upline towards Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) is suspended. Authorities are working to clear the debris, and long-distance trains are also impacted.

Pune

- The Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA) has mandated the use of Marathi for all official communications and administrative functions. This includes ensuring that correspondence, forms, notices, advertisements, tenders, and website information are available in Marathi to enhance public accessibility.

Punjab

- Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, has received a Rs 1.25 crore grant from Punjab & Sind Bank (PSB) for developing a 'Digital Technology Park.' The MoU was signed by PAU Vice-Chancellor Satbir Singh Gosal and PSB MD & CEO Swarup Kumar Saha.
- The Union Ministry of External Affairs reported receiving 140 property dispute complaints from NRIs across 18 states from January 2021 to June 2024, including 11 from Punjab and 10 from Haryana. The data was shared in the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh.

Rajasthan

- Heavy rains caused the water supply pipeline over the Sagarmati River at Nuriavas village to wash away, affecting water supply to 27 villages for a week. The PHED is repairing the pipeline, with floodwaters in Pisangan block reaching about 7 inches in 12 hours, according to Superintendent Engineer Satish Kumar Jain.
- Torrential rains in Rajasthan on Tuesday 06 August, caused a seven-year-old girl's death in Pali, damaged parts of Sonar Fort, and led to flood-like conditions in Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, and Ajmer. The rains caused the wall of Sonar Fort to crumble, dislodging stones and collapsing two houses within the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Tamil Nadu

- On Friday 09 August, Tamil Nadu set new records for solar power generation and absorption. The generation peaked at 5,979 MW, surpassing the previous record of 5,704 MW on August 2. Solar power absorption also hit a high of 41.40 million units (mu), exceeding the previous maximum of 40.9 mu recorded on August 3.

Telangana

- At the 95th birth anniversary celebrations of Justice Punjala Shiv Shankar, speakers emphasized that a true tribute to the social reformer would be successfully conducting a caste census. They argued that once the caste demographics are clear, it would reveal the path to political power, as majority groups would gain authority.

Uttar Pradesh

- An innovative scheme has been launched in Varanasi to empower women fish farmers by establishing aeration systems for intensive fish farming. The scheme aims to enhance water quality, control diseases and aquatic plants, and maintain optimal oxygen levels to boost fish production.

Upcoming News/Events**Madhya Pradesh**

- Authorities in Madhya Pradesh are linking the renewal and approval of arms licenses to the payment of overdue electricity bills in an effort to recover outstanding dues.
- The local administration has set a new deadline to provide tap water connections to the remaining 400 households under the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' in Indore district, aiming to achieve 100% coverage by the end of this month. Senior PHE officials confirmed that the task will be completed within one month.

Mumbai

- The Maharashtra Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) is set to issue tenders for consultants to finalize station planning for the Thane Ring Metro project. This initiative aims to improve connectivity between key areas and major railway stations, serving as a feeder line to the MMRDA's Metro 4 and Metro 5 lines, pending Centre approval.
- Mumbai commuters are staging a "white wear" protest on August 22 to draw attention to severe overcrowding in suburban trains. The protest, organized by the Mumbai Rail Pravasi Sangh, highlights the increased difficulties faced by passengers due to the prioritization of long-distance trains. Despite ongoing construction of new rail corridors, delays in Maharashtra's funding are slowing progress on urban transport projects.

Pune

- The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) will demolish 29 bungalows for violating environmental laws along the Indrayani River, as ordered by the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The Supreme Court recently rejected the bungalow owners' appeal against this decision. The owners face a Rs 5 crore penalty for environmental damage.
- The Union Cabinet has approved eight National High-Speed Road Corridor projects, totaling 936 km at Rs 50,655 crore. One significant project is the 8-lane elevated corridor from Nashik Phata to Khed near Pune, with an estimated cost of Rs 7,827 crore. These projects aim to boost logistics efficiency, reduce congestion, and enhance connectivity.

Punjab

- Punjab plans to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels by establishing 66 solar power plants, each with a 4 MW capacity, totaling 264 MW. The initiative was discussed in a meeting chaired by New and Renewable Energy Sources Minister Aman Arora and Power Minister Harbhajan Singh ETO.
- The NHAI may cancel or terminate eight highway projects in Punjab, worth Rs 14,288 crore, if the law and order situation does not improve, as stated by Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari. This warning follows recent reports of violence and threats against workers on the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway.

Rajasthan

- On World Tribals Day, social and political organizations in Rajasthan demanded a ban on the consumption, manufacturing, and sale of liquor in Tribal Sub Plan areas. They criticized the increase in liquor shops in these regions, viewing it as part of an anti-tribal agenda.
- The industries department is developing a plan to enhance state exports and offer container subsidies to the handicraft sector, a policy previously announced but implemented under the Congress government. States like Uttar Pradesh have provided similar subsidies to offset increased freight costs post-pandemic.

Tamil Nadu

- Coimbatore rail passengers have requested transferring the Pollachi-Kinathukadavu section from the Palakkad division to the Salem division. They argue that the current division of railway lines under three different divisions creates inefficiencies.

Telangana

- Telangana Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka announced an investigation into the quality of projects on the Krishna river undertaken by the previous BRS government. He criticized BRS leader KT Rama Rao for not addressing alleged issues with the Sunkishala project and stated that the cost of reconstructing a damaged retaining wall would be covered by the contracting agency, not the state.

Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh is poised to host the country's first solar expressway, with 1,500 acres along the Bundelkhand Expressway designated for the project. In a stakeholder consultation meeting led by UPEIDA CEO Manoj Kumar Singh, over two dozen companies participated to discuss the project, which aims to generate 450 megawatts of renewable energy, enough to meet the daily needs of 60,000 households.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- A Sierra Leone military court has sentenced 24 soldiers to 50-120 years in prison for their roles in a failed coup attempt last November. The attempted overthrow, which involved attacks on military sites and prisons, resulted in over 20 deaths and the escape of about 2,200 inmates. This follows the July sentencing of 11 civilians and police officers involved in the insurrection.
- Ethiopia has signed an agreement for designing a new four-runway airport near Bishoftu, which will be Africa's largest upon completion in 2029. With a capacity of 100 million passengers annually and parking for 270 aircraft, it aims to alleviate congestion at the current Bole Addis Ababa International Airport.

America

- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has banned the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) for 10 days, accusing its owner Elon Musk of inciting hate, civil war, and death. This action comes amid controversy over a disputed presidential election.
- A regional turboprop plane operated by Voepass crashed into a residential neighborhood near São Paulo, Brazil, killing all 61 people on board. The aircraft, en route from Cascavel to São Paulo's international airport, reportedly fell into a flat spin before crashing in the town of Vinhedo.

China

- The Philippines and China exchanged accusations after Chinese aircraft allegedly performed dangerous maneuvers and dropped flares near a Philippine military aircraft over the South China Sea. The Philippines condemned these actions as provocative, while China defended them as professional and legal.
- The Philippine and Vietnamese coast guards conducted joint exercises involving water cannon blasts, firefighting, and rescue drills, marking their first collaboration amid South China Sea disputes with Beijing. The exercises focused on humanitarian efforts, emphasizing the need for mutual support in the region.

Europe

- Belarus has reinforced its border with Ukraine after Ukrainian drones violated its airspace, targeting military positions in Russia's Kursk region. President Lukashenko warned of possible diplomatic repercussions if such incidents continue, while Belarus' Foreign Ministry demanded that Ukraine prevent future violations.

Middle East

- Israel has ordered additional evacuations in Gaza after a school shelter attack resulted in numerous casualties. The evacuation order forced tens of thousands of residents and displaced families to leave amid ongoing tank shelling and explosions.
- Pakistan
- Iran's President has nominated Abbas Araqchi as Foreign Minister and Mohsen Paknezhad as Oil Minister.

Pakistan

- Arshad Nadeem won gold in the Olympic men's javelin, setting a new Olympic record with a 92.97-meter throw and clinching Pakistan's first athletics medal. Neeraj Chopra, the defending champion from India, took silver with a throw of 89.45 meters, struggling with his other attempts.
- Karachi has seen a significant rise in street crime, with over 44,000 incidents reported from January to July this year. The majority involve motorcycle theft, with more than 31,000 motorcycles stolen or snatched, and over 11,800 mobile phones reported stolen.

United Kingdom

- UK Labour leader Keir Starmer scraps his holiday to focus on the response to ongoing riots. Thousands of police officers remain on duty as counter-protesters continue to outnumber anti-migration demonstrators across several towns and cities for a fourth consecutive day.
- Britain announces new sanctions against Belarus, targeting four individuals and three entities over human rights violations and support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The sanctions, coordinated with international partners, mark the fourth anniversary of Belarus's disputed 2020 presidential election. Foreign Secretary David Lammy condemns President Lukashenko's continued crackdown on civil society and calls for the release of all political prisoners.

United States

- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced on Friday 09 August, that it has identified a human case of swine flu. The source of the person's exposure is still under investigation.
- Remnants of Storm Debby caused severe flash flooding in northern Pennsylvania and southern New York, leading to around 30 rescues. The storm, now a depression, continued to trigger tornado warnings as it was expected to move out to sea by Saturday afternoon.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- The Sudanese government will send a delegation to Jeddah to discuss a U.S. invitation for ceasefire talks in Geneva scheduled for August 14. These talks aim to address the ongoing conflict between the Sudanese army and the RSF paramilitary.
- The foreign ministers of Somalia and Ethiopia will meet in Ankara next week to discuss a port deal Ethiopia signed with Somaliland, which strained ties between the two countries. Turkey is mediating the talks, following a previous meeting last month where both sides agreed to further discussions.

America

- Canada's two main rail companies, Canadian Pacific Kansas City and Canadian National Railway, have threatened to lock out employees on August 22 if labor contract negotiations fail, potentially halting the country's goods transport. The companies cited a lack of progress in talks with the Teamsters union, which has raised safety concerns, and have requested federal intervention.
- Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino urged the U.S. to expedite aid for repatriating migrants crossing into Panama through the Darien Gap. Mulino, who took office in July, emphasized the need for funds to support repatriation flights as part of efforts to reduce the dangerous migration route.

China

- Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka will visit China from Monday until August 21 to strengthen strategic ties, following Fiji's decision to maintain a policing cooperation deal with China, which has raised concerns in Australia. The visit aims to elevate their comprehensive strategic partnership, building on regional peace and security discussions held at the Pacific Islands Forum in Fiji.

Europe

- Austria's Chancellor has called for expanded powers for intelligence agencies to monitor communications on messaging apps following the thwarting of a planned suicide attack at a Taylor Swift concert in Vienna. This move aims to prevent extremist activities by enhancing surveillance capabilities.

Middle East

- Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi stated that the country will not allow itself to become a battleground for Iran or Israel, emphasizing that it will intercept any threats to its airspace and citizens. This statement comes amid increased regional tensions following attacks on militant group leaders.
- Dozens of Russian military personnel are being trained in Iran on the Fath-360 close-range ballistic missile system. Russian and Iranian officials signed a contract in December 2023 for the Fath-360 and the Ababil missile system, with expected delivery of these weapons to Russia soon.

Pakistan

- Pakistan has expressed support for efforts to prevent escalation in the Middle East amid rising tensions involving Israel and Iran. The country is backing diplomatic efforts to avoid a wider conflict.
- Pakistan army chief Gen Asim Munir condemned efforts to spread anarchy in the country, referring to recent turmoil in Bangladesh. He asserted that the army would oppose any attempts to create chaos and criticized India's claims about the two-nation theory, affirming Pakistan's enduring strength and resilience.

United Kingdom

- British Airways will halt flights to Beijing from October 26 until November 2025, citing unspecified reasons. The airline will continue daily flights to Shanghai and Hong Kong but has not announced a replacement route. European carriers, including British Airways, face longer and more expensive routes to Asia due to restrictions on Russian airspace, affecting travel and competition.
- King Charles has called for mutual respect and understanding following recent racist riots in Britain targeting Muslims and migrants. He praised the police and community groups for their responses and emphasized the need for national unity. Specialized police will remain on duty to prevent further unrest.

United States

- The Biden administration is lifting a ban on U.S. sales of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia, reversing a three-year policy aimed at pressuring the kingdom over the Yemen conflict. Sales of air-to-ground munitions will resume on a case-by-case basis, with notifications about the decision underway.
- The U.S. State Department will release \$3.5 billion in military aid to Israel, allocated from a \$14 billion supplemental funding bill passed by Congress in April. This decision follows rising tensions and a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

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