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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- Following Cyclone Hudhud's devastating impact on October 12, 2014, Vizag experienced a week-long power outage. In response, Andhra Pradesh EPDCL invested nearly ₹700 crore to upgrade the city's overhead electricity distribution network to an underground cable system.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated two Ekalavya Schools in Alluri Sitarama Raju district from Ranchi, Jharkhand, with a budget of ₹40 crore. The schools, located in Pedabayalu and Araku mandals, were formally opened by Zilla Parishad Chairperson J Subhadra and District Collector S Dinesh Kumar at Lakeputtu village.

Delhi

- The Delhi government has restarted its initiative to remove vehicles exceeding the age limit of 10 years for diesel and 15 years for petrol after a temporary halt due to a court directive. Following the Delhi High Court's order, the government formulated a policy in February to manage these vehicles effectively.
- A fire broke out at a chemical factory in Bawana on Sunday (13 Oct) morning, with no injuries reported. The fire department deployed 16 fire trucks and nearly 100 firefighters to combat the blaze, which continued for over three hours due to the presence of combustible materials in the building.

Goa

- The IMD, Panaji, issued a yellow warning on Saturday (12 Oct) as parts of Goa received rainfall due to a well-marked low-pressure area over the east-central Arabian Sea. The system is expected to move northwest and intensify into a depression over the central Arabian Sea on Sunday (13 Oct).
- The Goa Investment Promotion Board (IPB) met on Thursday 11 Oct, to review pending investment projects and ratified changes to proposals that had been granted in-principle approval. The meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, focused on reviewing older projects for progress and necessary adjustments.

Gujarat

- Delhi and Gujarat Police seized 518 kg of cocaine worth ₹5,000 crore in a joint operation under the "Zero Tolerance against Drugs" initiative. This follows a recent bust, bringing the total drug haul to 1,289 kg of cocaine and 40 kg of hydroponic marijuana, valued at ₹13,000 crore.

Haryana

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav have been named central observers for the Haryana BJP legislature party meeting. They will preside over the meeting to elect the next Chief Minister for Haryana, the party announced on X.
- The Haryana government has relaxed rules for verifying credentials of candidates recommended by HPSC/HSSC for Group A, B, C, and D posts. Character and antecedent verification will now occur within three months of joining, and candidates can submit a medical certificate within two months of joining.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced that the state will allocate ₹50 crore to cover 55 months of overtime dues for Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) employees, with full disbursement by March 31. While this step aims to address long-standing financial grievances and improve employee morale, the state's financial burden could increase.

Karnataka

- Students enrolled in UG and PG courses at Karnataka State Open University (KSOU) for the July 2023 session are set to begin their exams on October 14, but they have only PDF and e-textbooks via the university's app for study, as physical textbooks have not been provided. This situation has caused significant difficulties for thousands of KSOU students in open and distance learning programs.
- Since its launch on September 21, the Mysuru Dasara webpage has attracted over 10 lakh visitors, showcasing the popularity of the celebrations and public interest in various events. Hosted by the district administration, the website aims to provide updates and information about the Dasara festivities, recording 10 lakh hits by Sunday 13 Oct.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- AP-Genco is likely to abandon plans for a Thermal Power Plant at Chintalapudi in Eluru district due to the sub-optimal calorific value of the coal seams, which are primarily shale. Currently, the power utility sources coal for its TPPs from Mahanadi Coalfields and Singareni Collieries, facing high transportation costs.
- The IMD forecasts heavy to very heavy rain in Rayalaseema from October 14 to 17 due to a cyclonic circulation over the Bay of Bengal. A low-pressure area is expected to form over central south Bay of Bengal around October 14 and move towards north Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and south Andhra Pradesh within 48 hours.

Delhi

- The central government plans to launch an online system by Diwali to detect diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years operating in Delhi, as well as those lacking valid fitness and pollution certificates. This "e-detection" system will allow transport departments to identify registered vehicles and automatically generate e-challans.
- The Nammo Bharat train has begun trial runs on a 12-km stretch from Sahibabad to New Ashok Nagar, marking the entry of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor. The complete 82 km corridor is expected to be finished by June 2025, significantly reducing travel time between Delhi and Meerut to under an hour.

Goa

- Environmentalist Claude Alvares has alleged that the Goa government plans to install an additional 220 kV line on the 400 kV Tamnar line to support five Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the state. He highlighted that SEZs were previously scrapped in 2008 following public protests.
- Goa police will launch a drive on October 15 to prosecute landlords with unverified tenants. Between October 1 and 9, they verified the credentials of 20,000 tenants and house helpers, contributing to a total of 70,000 verifications this year to ensure public safety.

Gujarat

- Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL) officials have deemed it unfeasible to divert water from Ajwa reservoir into the Narmada branch canal. Consequently, the state government and Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) will need to explore alternative flood mitigation solutions for the city.

Haryana

- The new BJP government in Haryana will be sworn in on October 17 in Panchkula, with Prime Minister Modi and senior leaders expected to attend the ceremony. The party confirmed this in a statement on Saturday (11 Oct).
- Haryana Chief Secretary TVSN Prasad has instructed all administrative secretaries to visit grain markets to supervise paddy and millet procurement. During a virtual review meeting, he emphasized checking essential facilities like weighing machines, moisture-measuring tools, transportation, and storage at the mandis.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced that the state government has disbursed ₹32.32 crore through the Himachal Pradesh Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (HPBOCW) during its tenure. This financial aid has benefited 8,883 registered beneficiaries, with ₹10.59 crore for educational assistance, ₹12.97 crore for marriage assistance, and ₹1.71 crore for maternity and paternity benefits.

Karnataka

- The Karnataka state cabinet announced the establishment of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate alleged ₹7,200-crore irregularities in the procurement of medicines and medical equipment during the Covid-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2023.
- The Karnataka government plans to equip government schools with 'Avishkar Innovation Labs' to enhance skills in science, electronics, robotics, and artificial intelligence, promoting problem-solving and critical thinking. This initiative will cover 123 schools, including Karnataka Public Schools and Adarsh Vidyalayas across 17 districts, with labs set up in five specific schools in the region.

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

- Sales of home appliances like LED TVs and refrigerators saw positive growth this Navratri compared to last year, boosted by strong consumer demand. Retailers expect this encouraging sentiment to continue in the upcoming months.

Mumbai

- The Chheda Nagar Flyover in Mumbai, opened by CM Eknath Shinde, aims to reduce traffic congestion at the Eastern Express Highway intersection. This project is part of a larger improvement initiative, including a new connector bridge at Bandra Kurla Complex.
- The Indian Air Force celebrated the inaugural landing on the newly-built Runway 26 at Navi Mumbai Airport with an Airbus C-295 on October 11, followed by a Sukhoi SU-30 flypast. Commercial operations are expected to commence by the end of March next year.

Pune

- A total of 28 students from DY Patil School in Pimpri Chinchwad, Pune, were hospitalized due to food poisoning after consuming sandwiches prepared for breakfast. While some students were discharged after primary treatment, authorities confirmed that all hospitalized students are stable and out of danger.

Punjab

- The Punjab government has approved the sale and use of green crackers during specific hours for Diwali, Gurupurab, Christmas, and New Year's Eve. Green crackers will be allowed from 8 PM to 10 PM for Diwali, 4 AM to 5 AM and 9 PM to 10 PM for Gurupurab, and from 11:55 PM to 12:30 AM for both Christmas & New Year's Eve.
- The Punjab State Election Commission has canceled the gram panchayat elections in 24 panchayats of Muktsar district's Gidderbaha block due to complaints of wrongful rejection of nomination papers. Fresh dates for the polls will be announced.

Rajasthan

- In the last 30 days, six children under 10 have died from diphtheria in Rajasthan's Deeg district, raising concerns among state officials about the resurgence of this contagious disease, which was previously nearly eradicated due to high immunization rates. Symptoms include fever, sore throat, and severe airway obstruction.
- The Union Government has disbursed the first installment of the 15th Finance Commission grants for 2024-25 to Rural Local Bodies in Rajasthan, totaling Rs 1,267.78 crore. This includes Rs 507.11 crore in untied grants and Rs 760.67 crore in tied grants, distributed among 22 district panchayats, 287 block panchayats, and 9,068 gram panchayats for local governance and infrastructure development.

Tamil Nadu

- The Tamil Nadu cabinet approved special incentives for 14 new industrial projects worth ₹38,698 crore, expected to create employment for 46,931 people. Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu announced that these projects will span multiple sectors and be developed across the state.
- The Mysuru-Darbhanga Express collided with a goods train near Kavaraipettai railway station, resulting in 12-13 coaches derailing and a fire in two compartments. Rescue operations are ongoing, with emergency teams working to assess damage and casualties, while investigations are underway to determine the accident's cause.

Telangana

- Following the alleged Rs 7,000 crore DB Stock Broking scam in Assam, investors from Hyderabad are now filing complaints after losing substantial amounts of money in the fraudulent online stock broking company. This development reveals further complications in the ongoing investigation.

Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh's excise and liquor prohibition department reported revenue of ₹3,246.15 crore in September 2024, totaling ₹22,563.15 crore for the financial year, an increase of ₹2,336.60 crore from the previous year. By October 2024, an additional ₹270.66 crore was recorded.
- The Samajwadi Party announced its candidates for six of the ten Uttar Pradesh assembly seats up for by-elections, aiming to provide ample campaigning time. Notable candidates include Tej Pratap Yadav from Karhal and Naseem Siddiqui from Sisamau.

Upcoming News/Events**Madhya Pradesh**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate Rewa Airport on October 21 from Varanasi, with the main ceremony at the airport itself. Key officials, including Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla, are involved in the preparations for the event.

Mumbai

- Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport will close its runways on October 17, 2024, from 11 am to 5 pm for annual post-monsoon maintenance. Airlines have been informed to adjust schedules to minimize disruption during this period.
- MHADA will soon launch a lottery for approximately 20,000 affordable homes in Mumbai and Pune, priced between Rs 20 lakh and Rs 1 crore, targeting EWS and LIG groups. The authority aims to construct 50,000 affordable homes in Mumbai over the next five years.

Pune

- The Petrol Dealers Association in Pune, representing 900 dealers and transporters, plans to begin an indefinite strike on October 15 due to unresolved issues with oil companies. Grievances include alleged unfair tender practices and theft during fuel transportation, leading to disruptions in fuel supply across the district.
- Maha Metro plans to reduce train wait times to three minutes during peak hours on Pune's key routes, aiming to enhance commuter experience. The daily ridership reached 1.5 lakh in September, driven by new station openings, while commuters have requested improved last-mile connectivity, especially at stations like Bopodi.

Punjab

- The Punjab government will conduct fresh field tests on PR 126 and other hybrid paddy varieties due to rice millers' reluctance to accept them, citing lower out-turn ratios and higher grain breakage risks. This decision aims to address concerns over paddy procurement amid ongoing tensions with millers.

Rajasthan

- Rajasthan's leopard conservation project is facing setbacks due to human-wildlife conflict, exposing wildlife management issues. Recently, villagers in Udaipur's Kamol village killed a leopard, a protected species, after an alleged attack on a man.
- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change has notified the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around the Tal Chhapar Blackbuck Sanctuary, which extends from 1.0 to 3.4 km from its boundary, covering 22.45 sq km. A draft notification was published on May 3, 2023, inviting public objections and suggestions within 60 days.

Tamil Nadu

- The Met Department has issued an orange alert for Chennai and neighboring districts (Kancheepuram, Chengalpet, and Tiruvallur) on October 15, predicting heavy to very heavy pre-monsoon rain of 6 cm to 20 cm. Additionally, a yellow alert is in effect for Chennai and its suburbs on October 14 and 16, with expected rainfall of 6 cm to 12 cm.
- Trichy corporation will launch the city's first multi-level car parking (MLCP) on West Boulevard Road on Monday. The facility will operate temporarily to address the increased parking demand during the upcoming Diwali shopping season, particularly around commercial areas like Rockfort, Main Guard Gate, and Teppakulam.

Telangana

- To simplify the event permit application process in Cyberabad, police launched a new online portal on Friday 11 Oct, replacing physical submissions. Organizers must apply through this single portal at least 10 days or 7 working days in advance for timely processing.

Uttar Pradesh

- The government has issued guidelines to support the Zero Poverty campaign, emphasizing digital technology for effective operation of portals and mobile apps. The central portal for the campaign will be <http://zero-poverty.in>.
- Uttar Pradesh's Solar City initiative plans extensive solar installations, including 500 solar street lights in Varanasi and 1,000 in Kanpur for 2024-25. Ayodhya's programme will feature 766 smart solar street lights and solar facilities with a budget of ₹15.75 crore.

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

- Moody's upgraded Ghana's long-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings to "Caa2" from "Caa3" and "Ca," due to significant debt restructuring efforts. The outlook has been revised to positive, reflecting reduced financial pressures on the government.
- The presidents of Egypt, Eritrea, and Somalia agreed to strengthen cooperation for the Somali army to combat terrorism and secure its borders, further isolating Ethiopia. This move unsettles Addis Ababa, which has troops in Somalia but faces tensions with Mogadishu over Somaliland port plans.

America

- Nicaragua has cut diplomatic ties with Israel, accusing its government of being "fascist" and "genocidal" due to attacks on Palestinian territories. The move coincides with the anniversary of the Gaza war, amid rising tensions in the Middle East.
- Venezuela has canceled the passports of at least 40 journalists and activists since President Nicolás Maduro's re-election, in what rights groups label as increasing repression. Many passports were confiscated at the main airport, with the true number of affected individuals likely higher.

China

- China's finance ministry plans to increase debt issuance to support local governments, low-income subsidies, and recapitalize banks. The size of the fiscal stimulus remains unclear, raising market concerns.
- China signaled plans for more fiscal stimulus to boost its economy but withheld key details on the package's size, leaving financial markets speculating about its potential impact.

Europe

- Most top finance ministers and central bank chiefs from BRICS countries skipped a high-level meeting in Moscow, sending junior officials instead. Finance ministers from Egypt, UAE, and Iran attended, while Russia called for an alternative to the Western-led financial system.
- Germany's SPD has unveiled a campaign focused on boosting industry growth, protecting jobs, and introducing tax breaks. The country faces challenges like rising unemployment, high energy costs, and export competition from China and the U.S.

Middle East

- Turkey imposed anti-dumping duties ranging from 6.10% to 43.31% on steel imports from China, Russia, India, and Japan to protect domestic producers. The move affects around 4 million tons of imports, valued at \$2-2.2 billion, and follows rising trade tensions with China.
- Thousands are trapped in Gaza's Jabalia camp amid escalating Israeli attacks, according to Médecins Sans Frontières. Israeli strikes have killed at least 61 Palestinians across Gaza, with significant fatalities reported in Jabalia, where the military claims to have targeted militants.

Pakistan

- A brutal attack by approximately 40 armed men on small private coal mines in southwestern Pakistan on Friday 11 Oct, resulted in the deaths of at least 21 miners. The assailants, armed with guns, rockets, and hand grenades, struck while some miners were asleep, lining others up to shoot them. This incident is the deadliest in recent weeks in Balochistan, a mineral-rich province bordering Afghanistan and Iran.
- Pakistan's government has terminated power purchase contracts with five private companies, including the largest utility, to reduce costs amid rising energy prices. This decision, influenced by ongoing negotiations with the IMF, aims to save approximately 411 billion rupees (\$1.48 billion) over the coming years by ending "take or pay" agreements, which required payments regardless of power generation levels.

United Kingdom

- Britain has launched its first formal industrial strategy in seven years, aiming to provide stability and certainty for businesses ahead of an investment summit. The strategy focuses on eight growth sectors, including advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and digital technologies, responding to calls from manufacturers for long-term policy direction post-Brexit and pandemic.

United States

- Pemex's Deer Park oil refinery near Houston discharged 43,500 pounds of hydrogen sulfide gas over more than seven hours, resulting in the deaths of two contract workers and injuries to 35 others. The incident, which occurred on October 10, exceeded the hourly emission limit for the toxic gas by over 800 times.
- AutoNation has closed 38 sites in Florida due to damage from Hurricane Milton, with many locations experiencing wind or water damage. The company hopes to reopen as soon as power is restored and repairs are completed in the next 24 to 48 hours.

Africa

- Nigeria signed a deal with Shell, TotalEnergies, and Eni to supply 270 million cubic feet of gas per day to a \$3.5 billion Brass fertilizer and petrochemical plant. The project is expected to generate \$1.5 billion annually from exports, boosting Nigeria's gas revenue.
- Comoros will hold parliamentary elections on January 12, 2024, though opposition parties, including JUWA and Orange, plan to boycott. They cite distrust in President Azali Assoumani and concerns over electoral fairness.

America

- Uruguay's referendum to reduce the retirement age to 60 could strain the country's finances, according to analysts. The proposal raises concerns about long-term economic sustainability.
- Kenya will send 600 additional police officers to Haiti next month as part of an international anti-gang mission led by the Multinational Security Support (MSS). Despite commitments from 10 countries, only 430 troops, mainly from Kenya, have been deployed since the U.N.-authorized mission began in June.

China

- China's commerce ministry is considering additional trade measures against Taiwan, following criticism of a speech by Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te. Beijing claims Taiwan's ruling party has not lifted trade restrictions on mainland China.
- Four major Chinese state-owned banks, including China Construction Bank and Bank of China, announced mortgage rate cuts starting Oct. 25 to stimulate the economy. Rates will drop up to 30 basis points below the benchmark, following a central bank directive to boost the property market.

Europe

- Lithuanians are voting for a new parliament, with concerns over the cost of living and Russian threats dominating the election. The opposition Social Democrats are expected to lead with 18%, while Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė's party trails at 9%.
- U.S. President Joe Biden will visit Germany on October 18 after canceling his previous trip due to Hurricane Milton. Meetings with Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will focus on the Ukraine and Middle East conflicts.

Middle East

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the United Nations to evacuate troops from its UNIFIL peacekeeping force in Lebanon, citing concerns for their safety. He stated that their presence has made them hostages of Hezbollah, urging immediate action to protect the soldiers.
- Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan is set to visit Greece to address bilateral issues, including maritime zones and airspace, as noted by Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan.

Pakistan

- Chinese Premier Li Qiang is set to inaugurate operations at the \$200 million Gwadar International Airport in Pakistan's Balochistan province during his visit from October 14 to 17. The airport's opening was delayed for a security review following recent attacks by separatist militants, and it will serve both domestic and international flights, becoming one of Pakistan's largest airports.
- Pakistani authorities are implementing restrictions on the movement of Chinese citizens during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting next week due to security concerns following the recent killing of two Chinese engineers in a bombing claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army. The security alert instructs that all types of movement for Chinese citizens, including intra-city and airport transfers, be halted from October 14 to 17, coinciding with the SCO summit in Islamabad.

United Kingdom

- King Charles and Queen Camilla will host Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for a state visit at Buckingham Palace on December 3-4. This follows their recent meeting at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai last December.

United States

- CNN will host a town hall event with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris on October 23. The network invited both Harris and her Republican rival Donald Trump, but only Harris has accepted the invitation so far.
- The U.S. Department of Justice's proposed remedies to dismantle Google's search dominance may impact its profitability and hinder progress in artificial intelligence. The DOJ may seek a court order for Google to divest parts of its business, including the Chrome browser and Android operating system, which it claims support an illegal monopoly in online search.

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