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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- Jobs generated under MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh fell by 11.8% in April-September 2024, as per a LibTech India report, mirroring a national decline of 16%. This indicates widespread challenges in employment generation across India.
- In preparation for Cyclone Dana, the Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command, in coordination with NOIC Andhra Pradesh, has activated disaster response support. Local units are ready to provide supplies and medical aid if needed.

Delhi

- Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai urged central and neighboring states to intensify pollution control efforts, citing stubble burning and firecrackers as key concerns. He emphasized that swift action over the next 15 days, given the northwest winds, could greatly reduce pollution in the city.
- The government issued an advisory urging the public to check air quality indices before going outdoors, particularly for vulnerable groups, due to rising pollution levels. It recommends avoiding crowded areas, reducing burning activities, and using public transport to help mitigate health risks.

Goa

- Police have warned hotels and resorts of rising fake websites misusing their names, advising weekly online checks. SP Cybercrime Rahul Gupta urged prompt reporting of suspicious sites via cybercrime.gov.in or +91-8668989374 to aid in their swift removal.

Gujarat

- The municipal corporation has discovered a main Narmada trunk line beneath a commercial plot for sale in Chandkheda, preventing any construction. To resolve this, they plan to relocate the line at a cost of ₹5.29 crore, citing an error by the Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority from 2003-04.

Haryana

- Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has retained the home and finance ministries while also overseeing 12 other portfolios after the cabinet allocation. Anil Vij, an MLA from Ambala Cantt, has been assigned the energy and transport portfolios.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh High Court has issued a notice to the state government in response to a PIL challenging the mandatory display of personal information for eatery owners and staff. The petition alleges inflammatory statements by cabinet ministers have increased communal tensions, with a response due within three weeks.
- The Himachal Pradesh High Court mandates state officials to prevent encroachments on government and forest land in Kullu, emphasizing vigilance and immediate reporting of violations. Officials face strict consequences for negligence, including potential criminal and departmental actions.

Karnataka

- October rain in Karnataka has resulted in 25 fatalities, including women and children. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah reviewed the situation with deputy commissioners, noting that the state experienced an average rainfall of 181mm from October 1 to 25, significantly higher than the long-term average of 114mm.
- The Federation of Udupi-Kasaragod 400kV Power Transmission Line Action Committees submitted a memorandum urging the implementation of revised government guidelines for the Udupi-Kasaragod transmission line. They oppose the project, claiming it threatens their farms and properties, and demand adherence to regulations for any power transmission line above 66kV capacity.
- The Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) has installed CCTV cameras in 974 new buses across nine depots to enhance passenger safety and improve operational efficiency. Managing Director M. Rachappa stated that the move aims to provide evidence in accident scenarios, helping the organization manage legal claims more effectively.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) plans to build a third queue complex to manage over 70,000 daily pilgrims at Tirumala temple, far exceeding early 2000s figures. The first major queue complex, Vaikuntam, built in 1983, accommodates 17,000 pilgrims.
- Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced Union Cabinet approval for rail connectivity to Amaravati via a 3.2-km bridge over the Krishna River, estimated at ₹2,245 crore and set for completion in four years.

Delhi

- With rising pollution in Delhi's 13 hotspots, Environment Minister Gopal Rai announced drone surveillance to monitor these areas, where AQI levels are typically high. Amid residents' health concerns, Rai emphasized the government's continuous efforts to address pollution.
- Delhi government is streamlining traffic fine payments through a WhatsApp-based system, making it as easy as online shopping. An automated message with violation details and fine amount will be sent to the violator's mobile for quick payment.

Goa

- Goa's state government is launching the Apaar ID system for all school students, assigning each a unique 12-digit ID to track lifelong academic progress. This initiative, part of the National Education Policy, includes training teachers for effective registration and aims to streamline credit transfers within Goa and nationally.

Gujarat

- The Gujarat government has requested the 16th Finance Commission to review its financial status, citing a ₹12,000 crore annual revenue loss due to the liquor prohibition policy. They seek a significant increase in fund allocation to offset this excise tax shortfall.
- PM Narendra Modi and Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez will inaugurate the Tata-Airbus facility to manufacture C-295 tactical military aircraft in Vadodara on Monday. Under a Rs 21,935 crore contract, 16 aircraft will be delivered from Spain, while 40 will be produced in India, enhancing the IAF's capabilities.

Haryana

- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has approved 12 major projects for Haryana, including four-laning of key highways and new highway constructions. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini confirmed that a four-lane road will connect the Kurukshetra bypass, Ladwa bypass, and Yamunanagar, with a detailed project report to follow.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh aims to reserve 80% of jobs in private sectors for locals, said Industries Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan. The state has also allocated ₹22.9 crore for skill development and ₹16.83 crore for unemployment allowances, benefiting over 70,000 youth this fiscal.
- Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu urged NITI Aayog to create tailored support for hilly states like Himachal Pradesh, highlighting their unique needs. He requested a Green Bonus for forest conservation, better air and rail connectivity, and a fair share of hydropower royalties, while also seeking studies on rising cancer cases and natural disaster challenges in the region.

Karnataka

- Facing criticism for the government's inability to prevent rain-related disasters in Bengaluru, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced plans for a strict new law to curb illegal constructions. He stated that agencies like BBMP, BDA, and BMRDA will be given enhanced authority to enforce these regulations.
- The upcoming November 13 by-polls are expected to impact the state cabinet's agenda, leading to a postponement of contentious issues like the caste census. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah indicated that the cabinet will prioritize scheduling the winter legislative session starting November 9, deferring discussions on socio-economic surveys until after the election results on November 23.

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

- The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation is investing over Rs 50 crore to upgrade sound and light shows at Ujjain, Maheshwar, Jabalpur, and Khajuraho. The project aims for completion at three sites by the end of 2024, with Jabalpur's show expected to finish by April 2025.

Mumbai

- The Maharashtra government's ambitious redevelopment plan aims to transform Dharavi with modern amenities, focusing on improved sanitation, healthcare, and educational infrastructure. Covering 600 acres and housing nearly a million residents, Dharavi's overhaul seeks to uplift living conditions in this strategically significant area near Bandra Kurla Complex.
- A stampede at Mumbai's Bandra Railway Station, amid heavy crowds for Diwali and Chhath Puja, injured nine people, with two in critical condition. The incident occurred as passengers rushed to board the moving Bandra-Gorakhpur Antyoday Express; injured passengers were hospitalized.

Pune

- Maharashtra Metro and PMPML have introduced feeder buses from Pune Metro stations, including Yerawada and Swargate, to enhance last-mile connectivity. Commuters, however, raise concerns over low bus frequency, with waits up to 40 minutes on some routes.
- Pune's real estate market sees a 9.1% QoQ rise in residential demand, outpacing a 0.2% dip in supply. Average prices rose from Rs 8085 psf in Q1 to Rs 8803 psf in Q3 2024, with ready-to-move and under-construction prices up 6.2% and 11.1% QoQ, respectively.

Punjab

- Punjab and Haryana raised concerns at the Northern Zonal Council meeting about the increasing presence of UT cadre officials and the declining number of HCS and PCS officials in the Chandigarh administration. They also emphasized the need for improved access to Chandigarh International Airport and a connecting ring road.

Rajasthan

- The health department launched its state review mission in Karauli, assessing 21 medical institutions to improve healthcare standards. Principal Secretary Gayatri Rathore emphasized achieving 100% targets in maternal health, vaccinations, and TB eradication as key priorities for the state government.
- Rajasthan has launched a food safety mobile van under the 'Shuddha Aahar, War on Adulteration' campaign, allowing the public to test food items for adulteration for free within two to five minutes. If adulteration is detected, legal action will be taken against the seller, ensuring swift responses to food safety concerns.

Tamil Nadu

- The Sellur area in Madurai faces severe flooding during unusual rainfall, highlighting its vulnerability. Local authorities are working to improve drainage into the Vaigai River as residents express concerns about consistent floods affecting daily life and infrastructure.
- Twelve fishermen from Nagapattinam were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy on charges of poaching in their territorial waters. Their boat was seized, and they were taken to Mayiliddy Harbour after venturing into the sea on October 26, 2024.

Telangana

- Cyberabad police arrested six individuals for trying to claim ₹600 crore of government land in Raidurgam using fake documents. The land, owned by the Telangana Leather Industries Promotion Corporation, is earmarked for a commercial and residential complex.

Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh has seen a 38% rise in stubble-burning incidents from 598 last year to 826 this year during September-October, according to IARI data. Overall, stubble-burning cases in six states reached 4,369, down from 5,331 in 2023, with Punjab's incidents decreasing significantly.
- Uttar Pradesh won the National Water Award, securing second place for its water management and conservation efforts, while Odisha took first place. The award was presented by President Droupadi Murmu during the 5th National Water Awards ceremony in New Delhi.

Upcoming News/Events**Madhya Pradesh**

- After Diwali, devotees attending the Bhasma Aarti at Mahakal Temple must wear RFID-enabled smart wristbands to curb unauthorized entries. This modernization, managed by the Shri Mahakaleshwar Temple Committee, aims to streamline access, with the system set to launch soon.

Mumbai

- Mumbai's first elevated forest walkway at Malabar Hill is nearing completion, with civil works almost done and ancillary tasks underway. The 705-meter walkway, set to open by year-end, will feature views of the Arabian Sea, birdwatching areas, and a glass-bottom deck, designed to blend with the natural environment.
- Mumbai's first edutainment park, being developed in DN Nagar, Andheri (West) on a four-acre site, aims to blend learning with fun through themed pavilions on space, ocean, and environment. With a budget of Rs 16.34 crore, the first phase is set to complete within 12 months, featuring 3D VR shows, play areas, and an amphitheater.

Pune

- The Maharashtra Election Commission will set up 117 polling booths across 55 cooperative housing societies in Pune to increase voter turnout in the upcoming assembly elections. Societies with 800+ voters and a 250 sq ft area with basic amenities qualify for these dedicated booths.
- Pune police have advised residents to avoid Baner Hill between 6 pm and 5 am due to rising crime, introducing new security measures like helplines, CCTV, and a police help center. A safety awareness meeting with 200 residents was held at Murkute Garden, led by Inspector Mahesh Bolkotgi.

Punjab

- The Centre urges Punjab and Haryana to prepare for potential stubble burning, anticipating worsened air quality in Delhi-NCR. Officials noted that while current incidents are lower than last year, increased burning is likely with the upcoming harvest season, requiring proactive measures and public awareness.

Rajasthan

- The Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC) begins selecting 2,202 school lecturers in 24 subjects and various game coaches, with online applications open from November 5 to December 4. Additionally, the selection process for 15 assistant professor positions in the medical education department is underway, with applications accepted until November 22.
- The Rising Rajasthan Agriculture and Allied Sectors pre-summit attracted 350 participants to discuss innovations for doubling farmers' income. The event secured over Rs 19,497 crore in MOUs from 862 investors, emphasizing advancements in food processing and digital transformation.

Tamil Nadu

- A Tamil Nadu task force aims to reduce maternal mortality rates from 54 to below 10 per 1 lakh deliveries within two years, focusing on pre-birth planning and hospital classification. Key initiatives include a 24x7 monitoring system, staff training, and mentorship programs to improve care.

Telangana

- The Andhra Pradesh cabinet, led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, approved the release of one pending dearness allowance (DA) for government employees and pensioners, costing the state ₹3,000 crore. Additionally, it announced the sanctioning of 3,500 Indiramma housing units per assembly constituency starting from Diwali.

Uttar Pradesh

- The Game Changer Project aims to enhance football development in Uttar Pradesh by focusing on grassroots initiatives, talent identification, and coach education. It seeks to establish the state as a hub for football excellence, with a particular emphasis on increasing female participation in the sport.
- Despite a spike in dengue cases in Sangam City, health department officials expect a decline in the caseload within the next 10 days. The city has reported over 246 cases so far in October, with urban areas accounting for around 80% of infections.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- The RSF reportedly killed at least 124 people in El Gezira State, Sudan, on Friday 25 October, in one of the deadliest attacks of the ongoing 18-month war. Following the recent surrender of an RSF officer, Abuagla Keikal, to the army, activists accuse the RSF of retaliatory violence, displacing thousands and targeting civilians.
- Ethiopia's Yomif Kejelcha set a new men's half marathon world record, completing the Medio Maraton de Valencia in 57:30, breaking Kenya's Jacob Kiplimo's 2021 record by one second. Kejelcha surged ahead at the three-kilometer mark to outpace Kenyans Daniel Mateiko and Isaia Kipkoech.

America

- A gang attack in Port-au-Prince's Solino neighborhood forced thousands of residents to flee, escalating violence by gangs aiming to control more of Haiti's capital. Many fled with essential belongings as gunfire and smoke filled the area.
- The Panama Canal's profit grew 9.5% to \$3.45 billion despite drought constraints, with revenue at \$4.99 billion. Upcoming projects worth \$8.5 billion aim to enhance infrastructure.

China

- China's Zheng Qinwen claimed the Pan Pacific Open title by defeating American Sofia Kenin 7-6(5) 6-3, marking her third trophy of the season. Zheng showcased her power with 33 winners and 16 aces, securing victory in 1 hour and 52 minutes despite initial rain delays.
- China raised concerns about U.S. tariffs and Russia-related sanctions during a meeting of the Economic Working Group in Washington. China's Vice Minister of Finance Liao Min discussed recent stimulus policies and also met with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen during his visit.

Europe

- Russian forces have made further advances in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the coal mining town of Selydove, moving closer to capturing the strategic city of Pokrovsk. Reports indicate that Russian troops now control about 80% of Selydove, with continued efforts to secure the area for an advance on Pokrovsk, located 20 km to the northwest.
- Thousands protested in Lisbon against police violence after the shooting of Cape Verde-born resident Odair Moniz, which ignited unrest. Rights group Vida Justa organized the demonstration to avoid clashes with a smaller pro-police rally by the far-right party Chega.

Middle East

- Iraq's transport ministry has suspended all flights at its airports indefinitely due to regional tensions following Israeli military strikes on Iranian military targets. The announcement was made by the Iraqi state news agency INA.
- The Israeli military stated early on Saturday 26 October that it conducted "precise strikes" on military targets in Iran in response to what it described as "the continuous attacks from the regime in Iran against Israel."

Pakistan

- Pakistan achieved a surprising 2-1 series victory against England, leveraging home advantage and making bold selection decisions. After an initial loss, they dropped key players like Babar Azam and opted for spin specialists, which paid off with strong performances in Multan and Rawalpindi.
- At least 10 Pakistani frontier police were killed in a militant attack on an outpost near Dera Ismail Khan, as reported by the interior ministry. The attack, claimed by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, underscores the resurgence of militant violence in Pakistan's northwest amid rising ethnic separatist tensions in the south.

United Kingdom

- Right-wing and anti-racism protesters held large rallies in London on Saturday, both remaining peaceful amid a heightened police presence. Thousands joined the nationalist rally by Tommy Robinson, while counter-protesters displayed banners supporting refugees.
- British finance minister Rachel Reeves stated that the U.S.-Britain relationship will remain strong regardless of whether Donald Trump or Kamala Harris wins the Nov. 5 election. Reeves expressed confidence in continuing close ties with either leader while emphasizing the UK's past collaboration with both figures.

United States

- A U.S. judge approved a \$102 million settlement from the companies behind the ship that struck Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge in March, killing six people. While the companies deny liability, they agreed to the payment, which covers government response costs related to the disaster.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- Turkey's state energy company TPAO and Somalia's petroleum authority signed a deal for joint onshore hydrocarbon exploration, expanding energy cooperation. Turkey's Oruc Reis vessel will also begin offshore oil and gas exploration off Somalia's coast under a previous agreement.
- The IMF urges Sub-Saharan African nations reliant on commodity exports, like Nigeria, South Sudan, and Angola, to reform their economies for improved growth. The region is projected to grow at 3.6%, with diversified economies, such as Senegal and Tanzania, outpacing commodity-dependent ones.

America

- Brazilians are voting in runoff municipal elections across 51 cities, with right-leaning parties expected to dominate key state capitals. The results may strengthen former President Bolsonaro's Liberal Party as President Lula's Workers Party faces challenges amid his declining popularity.
- Canada plans to lower immigration targets, allowing 395,000 new permanent residents by 2025, down from 485,000 in 2024, addressing concerns over housing demand and rising prices.

China

- India and China have started implementing an agreement to resolve a military standoff along their disputed Himalayan border, marking a significant thaw in relations. Troops in the Ladakh region have begun withdrawing, with the process expected to conclude by the end of the month following recent talks between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- China plans to grant the Taliban tariff-free access to its construction, energy, and consumer sectors, aiming to strengthen economic ties. This move could help bolster Afghanistan's struggling economy by facilitating the export of its mineral resources, while also posing risks of militancy affecting China's interests in the region.

Europe

- President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia's defense ministry is exploring responses to potential U.S. and NATO support for Ukraine's use of long-range missiles against Russian territory. He warned that this would mark a significant escalation, indicating that such actions would involve NATO's direct participation in the Ukraine war.
- A series of Russian attacks across Ukraine resulted in civilian casualties, prompting President Zelenskyy to urge allies to increase pressure on Moscow. The strikes included missile attacks in Dnipro, a drone strike in Kyiv, and shelling near Kherson, underscoring Russia's ongoing aggression.

Middle East

- Turkey's foreign minister will visit Djibouti next week for a Turkey-Africa ministerial meeting, aiming to enhance cooperation between Turkey and African nations, officials report.
- Egypt has proposed a two-day ceasefire in Gaza to exchange four Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, amid ongoing Israeli airstrikes that killed 45 Palestinians. President Sisi suggested that discussions for a permanent ceasefire should resume within ten days following the initial ceasefire.

Pakistan

- Pakistan is seeking around \$1 billion from the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust to address climate risks, as confirmed by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. The country, already benefiting from a \$7 billion bailout, aims to finalize this request in the coming months, emphasizing its vulnerability to climate change.

United Kingdom

- British finance minister Rachel Reeves plans to raise employers' national insurance by up to 2 percentage points in the October 30 budget to fund the NHS. The measures are expected to generate around £20 billion, primarily affecting the private sector.
- England has introduced sanitary provisions at over 500 rugby clubs to boost female participation in the sport, as announced by the Rugby Football Union. The initiative, part of a £7 million investment, aims to improve facilities ahead of the women's World Cup next year.

United States

- The U.S. has approved a \$2 billion arms sale to Taiwan, including an advanced air defense missile system tested in Ukraine. This move aims to bolster Taiwan's defense amid increasing military pressure from China, which recently conducted war games around the island.
- The U.S. Navy is advancing plans to equip certain ships with Patriot interceptor missiles to counter the threat of China's hypersonic weapons in the Pacific. This decision reflects growing concerns about maritime security amid rising tensions.

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