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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) has advocated for an integrated approach to implementing Mission LiFE, aiming to inspire environmental preservation. Dr. Ajay Mathur highlighted Andhra Pradesh's leadership in combating climate change and promoting energy efficiency as key to achieving India's climate goals.

Delhi

- Delhi International Airport is facing disruptions due to dense fog and high pollution, impacting flight schedules and traffic. IndiGo issued a travel advisory, urging passengers to check flight statuses and allow extra time for travel due to low visibility.
- The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) inaugurated an all-women "Sakhi depot" with 223 women employees, including 89 drivers and 134 conductors. However, female drivers protested, demanding permanent jobs and equal pay with their male counterparts, delaying bus departures until evening.

Goa

- Around 37% of the 10.9 lakh PDS beneficiaries in the state haven't completed the e-KYC process for their ration cards. The civil supplies department warned that failure to complete e-KYC within 15 days will lead to suspension from the ration card data.

Gujarat

- In a joint operation, authorities seized 700 kg of methamphetamine worth up to Rs 3,000 crore off the Porbandar coast and 82.5 kg of cocaine in Delhi. Eight foreign nationals, possibly Iranians, were arrested during the methamphetamine bust.
- Gujarat received Rs 7,140 crore in CSR funds over five years, becoming the third-largest recipient in India. CSR spending saw an 86% increase from Rs 1,082 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 2,008 crore in 2022-23.

Haryana

- Haryana has eight cities in the "very poor" air quality category, with Delhi leading at AQI 396. Stubble burning contributes significantly to the deteriorating air quality in the region.
- On Sunday 17 November, 12 out of 14 districts in the NCR reported 'severe' and 'very poor' air quality, with Bahadurgarh in Haryana recording the highest AQI of 452. Due to this, primary classes in four Haryana districts were shifted to online mode, while GRAP 3 restrictions were enforced.

Himachal Pradesh

- The BJP welcomed the Himachal Pradesh High Court's decision declaring the appointment of six Chief Parliamentary Secretaries (CPS) as void, calling it a victory for the people. BJP leader Jai Ram Thakur criticized the Congress-led government, demanding the termination of CPS memberships, claiming the appointments were unconstitutional and financially burdensome.
- To manage the growing pollution caused by horse dung in Kufri, the Himachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board (HSPSCB) has recommended installing a bio-methanation plant with a capacity of 5-6 MT/day. This is in response to environmental concerns raised by the National Green Tribunal regarding the impact of horse riding, a major tourist activity in Shimla.

Karnataka

- Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation has introduced Jatayu litter-picking machines to clean narrow streets and parking areas efficiently. The machines collect up to 500 liters of waste in 7 minutes using a 20-foot telescopic hose.
- Karnataka Women's Commission chairperson Nagalakshmi Chowdhary urged better facilities at the KSRTC bus stand after finding a woman struggling with sanitation issues. She highlighted high toilet fees and lack of amenities like doors at the Mother Care Centre.
- Minister HK Patil emphasized the state's efforts to enhance justice access by establishing courts in remote areas and amending the Civil Procedure Code for quicker case disposal. He highlighted the role of courts in protecting citizens' rights and combating social evils.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- The Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) has agreed to extend the deadline for completing 50 drinking water schemes in urban areas of the state, following delays due to the government's failure to release its share of funds. The schemes were initially planned during the previous TDP regime to improve water supplies in 50 towns and cities.

Delhi

- A new study by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) reveals that the sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions of 12 coal-based thermal power plants near Delhi could be reduced by 67% with the installation of flue gas desulfurization (FGD) technology.
- India is introducing an ITMS under the PM-E Bus Sewa scheme to improve bus tracking and efficiency. The system aims to reduce commuter anxiety by ensuring reliable and timely public transport services.

Goa

- Goa CM Pramod Sawant announced that around 2,000 vacancies will soon be advertised by the Goa Staff Selection Commission. Recruitment for these posts will be conducted transparently, with 1,925 vacancies set for advertisement shortly.

Gujarat

- The Gujarat government is preparing master plans for 23 eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) to balance development with ecological preservation. These plans will set guidelines for activities within ESZs and involve consultations with local stakeholders.
- The Gujarat government is creating a child protection policy to safeguard vulnerable children, emphasizing education, safety, and welfare. It will establish systems to ensure swift action on child rights violations.

Haryana

- On National Press Day, Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini announced a cashless medical facility for journalists, similar to government employees' benefits. He praised the media for its crucial role in nation-building, transparency, and upholding democratic values.
- The Haryana government has ordered the closure of schools up to Class 5 due to rising pollution levels. Online classes will be held for these students to ensure their health and safety amid severe AQI levels in Delhi and surrounding areas.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh government has floated tenders for the 13.79-km Shimla ropeway, set to begin in March 2025. This project aims to ease traffic congestion in Shimla, which sees over 10,000 vehicles daily and attracts 21.43 lakh tourists annually.
- The Himachal Pradesh government is encouraging private sector solar power projects through the "Come and Install Solar Power Projects" initiative. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu emphasized fast-tracking procedures to promote these projects, which will boost the state's green energy transition, create jobs, and improve economic growth.

Karnataka

- A multicultural festival will be held in Mangaluru on Dec 3-4 as part of Karnataka Suvarna Sambhrama, organized by various cultural academies and the district administration. The event will showcase cultural performances from different linguistic communities, with a grand procession and dance drama highlighting regional folk arts.
- Karnataka's upcoming industrial policy (2024-2029) will offer district-specific, production-linked, and employment incentives, focusing on women's opportunities and sustainability. Set to launch before the 'Invest Karnataka' summit, it aims to make the state a \$1 trillion economy.
- Mandya police will deploy over 2,500 personnel for the All India Kannada Sahitya Sammelana from Dec 20-22, 2024, with 200 CCTV cameras for enhanced security. The event is expected to attract over 1.5 lakh attendees daily, surpassing last year's turnout.

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Madhya Pradesh

- Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan defended the BJP's financial planning for the Ladli Behna scheme, comparing it to Maharashtra's Ladki Bahin scheme. He criticized Congress for unfeasible promises, claiming that MP's financial growth supports such initiatives without affecting capital expenditure.
- The MPPSC Assistant Professor Recruitment Exam in Indore saw a 40% turnout, with fewer than 1,200 candidates attending out of 3,000 applicants. The exam covered 19 subjects and aimed to fill 109 specialized posts, with strict security measures and no cheating incidents reported.

Mumbai

- The BMC missed the November 14 deadline to lower the second girder of the Gokhale Bridge, delaying the April 2025 completion timeline further. Multiple deadlines for the bridge, including two lanes by May 2023 and four lanes by year-end, have already lapsed.
- Authorities in Thane seized cash, liquor, and contraband worth ₹27.68 crore since the election code of conduct began on October 15, ahead of the Maharashtra elections on November 20. Separately, ₹14.5 crore in gold was confiscated in Nagpur for lacking Election Commission clearance during transit.

Pune

- The Pune excise department has filed 59 proposals against liquor bars under Section 93 of the Maharashtra Prohibition Act. Since October 21, it has registered 1,237 cases, arrested 1,179 people, and seized 982 vehicles worth ₹5.55 crore.
- Ahead of the election code of conduct, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar approved ₹1,256 crore under DPDC and ₹5,500 crore in administrative projects for Pune, including infrastructure and health upgrades. However, these initiatives stalled post-code implementation, frustrating candidates reliant on showcasing progress for voter appeal.

Punjab

- Ludhiana MLA Ashok Prashar inaugurated projects worth ₹1.88 crore, including the city's first street vending zone near Children's Park costing ₹47 lakh and redevelopment of central verges from Cheema Chowk to Suffian Chowk and other areas for ₹92 lakh. These initiatives aim to address long-pending urban development issues.

Rajasthan

- The exclusion of solar panel production from the manufacturing category in Rajasthan's RIPS-2024 has disappointed the industry, which views solar panel manufacturing as key to large-scale job creation. Only solar cell, semiconductor, and related equipment manufacturers are included under the scheme, while panel assembly is not.
- In August, Rajasthan's education department launched a health survey that identified 1,200 students needing surgery. Health camps will be organized at block or district levels to provide necessary medical support under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK).

Tamil Nadu

- Coimbatore district leads in implementing the Tamil Pudhalvan scheme, benefiting 22,311 male students. The scheme provides ₹1,000 monthly to students in Classes VI to XII, with 400 camps and 8,000 new bank accounts opened for beneficiaries.

Telangana

- The Congress government sanctioned 4,696 Indiramma houses for families displaced by the Mid Manair Reservoir project. Each beneficiary will receive ₹5 lakh under the Indiramma Indlu scheme, as part of the R&R package.
- Power usage in Hyderabad has risen by 15%, with consumption increasing from 79 million units to 90 million units. This surge is attributed to fresh connections in new residential colonies and a rise in commercial establishments across various city areas.

Uttar Pradesh

- A delegation of 50 farmers and 20 technical assistants from Varanasi is on a five-day tour to Jabalpur, MP, to study millet production techniques under the UP Millets Revival Programme. The tour, flagged off by MLA Sunil Patel, aims to promote millet cultivation through training at Jawaharlal Nehru Agricultural University.
- Over 14.5 lakh e-rupee vouchers have been issued in Uttar Pradesh to help pregnant women access essential diagnostic services, with 6.81 lakh already used. Azamgarh leads in distribution, followed by Agra and Badaun.

Upcoming News/Events

Madhya Pradesh

- CM Mohan Yadav prioritizes expanding healthcare in Madhya Pradesh, with plans to lay the foundation for a new medical college in Ujjain on Nov 21. The state has significantly increased its medical colleges and MBBS seats, with more colleges being developed through self-financing and PPP models.
- Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board plans annual festivals in Chanderi, Mandu, and Orchha in November and December to attract tourists during the winter holiday season. These events will highlight local art, crafts, and heritage, with Chanderi's festival set for the first week of December.

Mumbai

- Over 4,000 candidates are contesting the Maharashtra Assembly elections for 288 constituencies, with Mumbai Suburban having the highest number of candidates (315) and Sindhudurg the least (17). The voter base includes 22.2 lakh first-time voters and 6,101 transgender voters.
- A city-based environmental group urged Maharashtra Assembly election candidates to adopt 20 climate action initiatives to address climate change and ensure sustainable growth. The appeal, led by Majhi Vasundhara's "Green Man of Mumbai," highlights the need for proactive environmental policies.

Pune

- Pune district will set up temporary crèches at 2,100 polling stations to support women voters with children during the Maharashtra elections. Managed by Anganwadi workers, these crèches will provide toys, water, and nutritious food for children.
- To address communication gaps, Pune's election office will deploy runners at 37 polling stations in remote, hilly areas without mobile connectivity on November 20. These areas lack infrastructure due to geographical challenges, as confirmed by officials.

Punjab

- Farmers in Amritsar region are increasingly encouraging their children to stay and pursue agriculture due to limited job opportunities abroad, especially with tightening visa policies in countries like Australia and Canada. Government incentives are seen as a way to promote local farming and agricultural business ventures, fostering a shift away from migration.

Rajasthan

- The Rajasthan school education department has formed a committee to review the state curriculum, focusing on removing undesirable topics. The committee, led by Professor Kailash Sodani, will submit recommendations within 30 days.
- The groundwater department expects a rise in groundwater levels in Rajasthan by 2025, following the Atal Bhujal Yojana's implementation in 17 districts. A post-monsoon impact study will assess the effectiveness of the scheme in 30 blocks, with positive results already seen in 8 blocks.

Tamil Nadu

- Union Minister Giriraj Singh announced Tamil Nadu's support for a technical textile hub. The National Technical Textile Mission, with a ₹1,400 crore budget, aims to expand the textile market from \$176 billion to \$350 billion by 2030.

Telangana

- CM A Revanth Reddy promised to improve school infrastructure and take strict action against substandard food in residential schools. The government will allocate 7% of the state budget to education, with various initiatives for teachers and maintenance.
- Telangana attracted Rs 36,000 crore in life sciences investments over the past year, creating 51,000 direct jobs. The state will introduce a dedicated life sciences policy by year-end.

Uttar Pradesh

- Over 14.5 lakh e-rupee vouchers have been issued in Uttar Pradesh, enabling pregnant women to access essential diagnostic services. Azamgarh leads in distribution, with 6.81 lakh vouchers already used statewide.
- The UP government has issued new directives to restructure School Management Committees (SMCs), ensuring 50% women participation and representation from all categories. The move aims to enhance community involvement and improve education quality in state-run schools.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Nigeria, both nations agreed to strengthen collaboration in maritime security, intelligence, and counter-terrorism. Modi's first visit in 17 years, also focused on economic ties, including boosting Indian investment in Nigeria's economy and steel sector.
- Senegal voted in a legislative election on Sunday 17 November, aiming to secure a majority for President Bassirou Diomaye Faye's reform agenda amid concerns over political unrest. Faye urged voters to remain peaceful, with over 7 million registered voters choosing from 41 parties for the 165-seat assembly.

America

- Residents along Honduras' northern coast waded through waist-deep water on Friday 15 November, carrying belongings as Tropical Storm Sara caused severe flooding. The storm, near popular tourist spots, also affected Belize and Guatemala.

China

- Chinese President Xi Jinping began a week-long South America tour by inaugurating a \$1.3 billion deep-water port in Peru, aiming to boost trade and influence. Xi will attend the APEC summit in Lima and the G20 summit in Rio, with a state visit to Brazil.
- China confirmed that the Philippines sent supplies to a warship grounded on Second Thomas Shoal, a disputed South China Sea atoll. The Philippine Coast Guard rotated personnel and delivered supplies to the vessel, which has been stranded since 1999, amidst ongoing tensions between the two nations over the area.

Europe

- Russia conducted its largest airstrike on Ukraine in nearly three months, deploying 120 missiles and 90 drones, killing at least seven people and severely damaging Ukraine's power infrastructure. The attack heightens concerns of prolonged blackouts as winter approaches, marking a grim milestone nearly 1,000 days into the invasion.
- OMV's gas supply from Gazprom remains suspended for a second day over a pricing dispute linked to an arbitration case. Meanwhile, other European buyers, including Slovakia and Hungary, have increased purchases of unsold Russian gas.

Middle East

- An Israeli strike on central Beirut killed Hezbollah's media relations chief Mohammad Afif, according to Lebanese security sources. Hezbollah has not yet confirmed the report.
- An Italian air force plane carrying over 15 tons of humanitarian aid for Gaza departed from Pisa on Saturday. The aid, collected by Misericordie d'Italia, will be delivered via Cyprus as part of Italy's ongoing efforts to support civilians and promote conflict de-escalation.

Pakistan

- Pakistan held discussions with the IMF last week on its \$7 billion bailout reform agenda, with no new taxes planned. The talks focused on reforms in taxation, energy, privatization of loss-making SOEs, and public finance, ahead of the first review in Q1 2025.
- The IMF held constructive talks with Pakistan from Nov 12-15 on economic reforms and policy under the \$7 billion bailout. The discussions, ahead of the first review in Q1 2025, focused on strengthening growth and reducing vulnerabilities, though some lapses led to IMF intervention.

United Kingdom

- A senior adviser to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump suggested Britain prioritize trade alignment with the U.S. over closer ties with the European Union.
- British public transport operator FirstGroup (FGP.L) announced a £50 million (\$63.44 million) share buyback and slightly raised its 2025 forecast, driven by strong bus and rail services. The company's adjusted revenue for the first half ending Sept. 28 rose to £649.6 million, up from £634.8 million a year earlier.

United States

- President-elect Donald Trump announced Chris Wright, founder and CEO of Liberty Energy, as his pick to lead the Department of Energy. Wright, a staunch fossil fuel advocate, is expected to support Trump's energy policies and oppose global climate change initiatives, having previously dismissed the climate crisis.
- The CDC confirmed the first case of clade I mpox in the U.S., diagnosed in a person who recently traveled from Eastern Africa. The individual received treatment upon return, is isolating at home, and is showing improving symptoms.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- Nigeria plans a 47 trillion naira (\$28.18 billion) budget for 2025, with a 13.8 trillion naira deficit and assumptions of \$75 per barrel oil prices and 2 million barrels per day production. The budget also projects a stronger exchange rate of 1,400 naira to the U.S. dollar.
- Children from East Africa are urging world leaders at COP29 to protect their education from climate impacts, as heatwaves and floods have disrupted schools. In South Sudan, extreme temperatures have kept millions of children out of school, affecting their learning and exams.

America

- Residents of Rio's Morro da Babilonia favela hope to highlight their solar power project at the G20 summit, as local non-profit Revolusolar expands its initiative to provide clean energy. The project aims to reach 100 families by next year, with support from Brazil's G20 Social event.
- Argentina will partially eliminate taxes on foreign goods, increasing the tax-free purchase limit from \$1,000 to \$3,000 per package starting in December. The measure, part of President Javier Milei's economic plan, also exempts up to \$400 in tariffs on personal imports.

China

- Xi Jinping expressed a willingness to work with Donald Trump's team while meeting Joe Biden in Peru, aiming to ease tensions ahead of the next U.S. presidential transition. Trump's foreign policy has focused on a tougher stance toward China.
- Chinese defense firms will participate in Vietnam's international defense expo in Hanoi from December 19-22, marking a potential shift in military ties between the two nations. This follows Vietnam's efforts to diversify its sources of military equipment beyond Russia.

Europe

- The G7 leaders reaffirmed their commitment to imposing severe sanctions on Russia and supporting Ukraine for as long as necessary. The joint statement, issued as Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears its thousandth day, underscores the G7's united stance against Russia's aggression.
- Ukraine's grid operator announced temporary power cuts on Monday 18 November from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. after Russia's largest airstrike in three months damaged critical energy infrastructure, killing seven people. Repair efforts are ongoing across affected regions, including Volyn, Rivne, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhzhia.

Middle East

- The Israeli military issued call-up notices to 7,000 ultra-Orthodox men to support its southern and northern border conflicts. The move follows a Supreme Court ruling ending blanket conscription exemptions for seminary students.
- Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati affirmed that his government prioritizes the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which mandates southern Lebanon remain free of non-state weapons. Efforts to reach an understanding are ongoing, according to his post on X.

Pakistan

- Beijing is urging Pakistan to allow Chinese security staff to protect its citizens in Pakistan, following a series of attacks, including a car bombing in Karachi. The talks, spurred by growing concerns over security, aim to establish a joint security management system.
- China reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Pakistan in counter-terrorism efforts after two Chinese nationals were injured in a shooting in Karachi. The foreign ministry vowed to thwart any attempts to harm China-Pakistan relations and hold terrorists accountable.

United Kingdom

- British energy regulator Ofgem has approved a £2 billion (\$2.5 billion) funding package for the Eastern Green Link 1 (EGL1) project, which will connect Scotland to northeast England via 200 km of subsea and underground cables. This project, set for construction in 2025, aims to power over two million homes, reduce reliance on gas markets, and cut consumer energy bills by £870 million annually.

United States

- The Biden administration will permit Ukraine to use U.S.-provided weapons for long-range strikes on Russian territory, marking a policy shift. This decision comes as Ukraine plans its first such attacks, following months of requests from President Zelensky and concerns over Russia's deployment of North Korean troops.
- Elon Musk's government efficiency panel, aiming to streamline U.S. bureaucracy, seeks "high IQ" employees and plans to hold weekly livestreams, as shared in X posts about President-elect Donald Trump's initiative.

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