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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu, despite financial challenges, pledged to fulfill all election promises, balancing welfare with development. During the launch of 'Deepam-2' in Srikakulam, he distributed free LPG cylinders to BPL families and presented welfare benefits to beneficiaries.
- A lightning strike caused an explosion at a firecracker unit in Suryarao Palem, East Godavari, resulting in the deaths of two women and injuring five others critically. The fire ignited stored materials, while six workers escaped unhurt.

Delhi

- Delhi saw a 44% rise in alcohol sales before Diwali, with nearly 39 million bottles sold this year compared to 26.9 million last year, driven by improved brand availability, gift purchases, and order backlogs.

Goa

- The Goa government, following NGT directives, has formed three committees to enhance air quality monitoring: the State Steering Committee, the State Air Quality Monitoring Committee, and District Committees for North and South Goa. These bodies will oversee air quality measures, set emission reduction targets, and address pollution grievances, aiming to ensure a healthier environment.

Gujarat

- Unauthorized websites are still booking Asiatic lion safaris in Gujarat, despite a notice from the Gujarat State Human Rights Commission urging the forest department to address illegal bookings. Investigations reveal several private sites mislead tourists by offering earlier dates than the official government portal.
- The Gujarat Common Admission Service (GCAS) is now in effect, but universities await pending fee refunds after the admission process concluded. Promised pro-rata refunds, especially for Gujarat University, have not yet been disbursed by the higher education department.

Haryana

- Haryana's farmers have received ₹9,439 crore directly in their bank accounts for paddy and millet, comprising ₹8,545 crore for paddy and ₹894 crore for millet producers. As of now, 46.62 LMT of paddy has arrived in mandis, with 44.59 LMT procured at the minimum support price (MSP).
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the U-WIN portal to streamline immunisation services, with Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini highlighting its importance for equitable health access. The portal enhances the state's Universal Immunisation Programme by enabling real-time tracking of vaccination status for beneficiaries.

Himachal Pradesh

- An inter-ministerial central team assessed the damage in Himachal's Mandi district, estimating losses of around ₹213.22 crore due to this year's monsoon impacts. The team, led by Mihir Kumar from the home ministry, visited affected areas and held discussions with local officials to understand the severity of the situation.
- Post-Diwali, air quality in Himachal Pradesh has worsened, with the AQI reaching 'poor' to 'very poor' levels in several areas. Baddi recorded the highest pollution with an AQI of 392, while the state's average AQI rose to 140 from 92 last year, attributed to increased cracker use.

Karnataka

- The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has submitted a ₹100 crore project report for a new bus terminal at Banni Mantap to address Mysuru's growth and tourism needs. This terminal aims to alleviate congestion at the current KSRTC suburban bus stand, complementing existing rural bus facilities along the Mysuru-Bengaluru road.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu announced plans to open the Rushikonda Hills bungalows to the public to reveal "extravagance" in their construction by the former Jagan Mohan Reddy government. Naidu, joined by cabinet members, highlighted the environmental impact of these palatial buildings.
- Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh met Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in Redmond, inviting him to support the state's digital governance and smart city projects. Lokesh highlighted Andhra's IT ambitions and requested Nadella's collaboration to elevate new IT hubs and innovation parks.

Delhi

- The Delhi government plans to implement a cloud kitchen policy within 15 days, offering single-window clearance, financial aid, and compliance relaxations for non-dine-in outlets, aiming to foster growth in the sector until 2029. Additionally, outlets under 250 sq. meters will be exempt from fire NOCs, subject to self-certified safety compliance.

Goa

- Goa CM Pramod Sawant urged cattle owners to prevent animals from roaming on streets and highlighted a government subsidy of ₹600 per day for maintaining four cattle. He emphasized that caring for cows prevents road accidents and aligns with government efforts to reduce stray cattle issues.

Gujarat

- The Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority (Auda) has approved a proposal to allocate a 1,394 sq m plot in Sanand's TP Scheme No. 1 for a new municipality building. This decision comes in response to local leaders' requests due to the recent construction developments in the Sanand area.
- As Indian markets experience a bullish trend with a 25% return since last Diwali, Gujarat-based companies stand out with gains up to 186%. Notable performers include Ganesh Housing Corporation (186%), Epigral Ltd (134%), and Torrent Power Ltd (132%), reflecting Gujarat's robust financial strength.

Haryana

- The Haryana government urges farmers to stop burning crop residue, citing its contribution to air pollution and soil nutrient depletion. The newly launched 'Haryana Parali Protsahan Yojana 2024-25' offers a ₹1,000 per acre subsidy for residue management.
- To address traffic and parking challenges, the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSIIDC) plans to build a multilevel parking facility in Udyog Vihar-4, accommodating 500 cars on 1.5 acres near Bihari Market.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh High Court has criticized the slow progress of parking construction near Indira Gandhi Medical College in Shimla, seeking a status report on future plans. The court urged the contractor to enhance manpower and resources to meet construction deadlines, while addressing traffic solutions around IGMC.
- The Airport Advisory Committee, led by Kangra MP Rajeev Bhardwaj, emphasized the need for a dedicated, well-trained security force at Kangra Airport during a recent meeting. They also discussed introducing a shuttle bus service to major destinations for passenger convenience.

Karnataka

- Karnataka's home minister G Parameshwara instructed district deputy commissioners to halt eviction notices to farmers under the Waqf Act, prioritizing revenue records for land ownership. The directive follows claims by the Waqf Board regarding certain lands, emphasizing that only valid claims aligning with official records will be recognized.

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Madhya Pradesh

- Madhya Pradesh has opened a new state-of-the-art shooting range in Shivpuri, making it the only state in India with two high-level shooting ranges managed by the sports department. These facilities aim to foster talent development in central India, providing aspiring shooters, especially from rural areas, with easier access to quality training and increasing participation in the sport.
- Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated the Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia sports complex in Ujjain, costing ₹11.43 crore, and announced plans for a world-class cricket stadium at Vikram University's sports ground.

Mumbai

- Mumbai police have imposed a month-long ban on drones, microflight aircraft, paragliders, and hot air balloons to prevent potential security threats. The order, effective from October 31 to November 29, allows exceptions for police use or with specific permissions.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar praised Mumbai as a global symbol of counter-terrorism, emphasizing the need for India to take a firm stance against terrorism and learn from past mistakes. He highlighted Mumbai's resilience post-26/11 and noted India's leadership in counter-terrorism discussions during its tenure on the UNSC, including a meeting held at the site of a previous attack.

Pune

- The Rickshaw Mitra prepaid auto booth at Pune railway station has been discontinued after its contract expired on October 22, 2024. Auto-rickshaw unions are urging the Regional Transport Office (RTO) to renew the service, which they argue is essential for passenger convenience, especially during the busy Diwali season.

Punjab

- Punjab has reported at least 379 incidents of farm fires, with Sangrur district leading with 66 cases, followed by Ferozepur (50) and Tarn Taran (42), according to the Punjab Pollution Control Board. The state saw a significant spike on Friday, totaling 587 cases, highlighting ongoing concerns about stubble burning in the region.

Rajasthan

- A village in Rajasthan, through the 'Shaheed Bhagat Singh familial forestry' nursery, distributes indigenous saplings to combat global warming. Over the past four years, this community initiative has provided over 200,000 saplings across Rajasthan, Punjab, and Haryana, with 33,000 new saplings set for distribution starting August 23.
- At least 12 people died and over 41 were injured in Rajasthan's Sikar district when a private bus lost control while racing another vehicle and crashed into an overbridge wall.

Tamil Nadu

- Approximately 80 homes in KVR Nagar and Periyar Nagar, within Tirupur corporation limits, were flooded due to heavy rainfall on Friday night. Local officials reported significant damage to household items and ongoing efforts to clear blocked drainage systems, with temporary accommodations provided for affected residents.

Telangana

- The Telangana government has raised the allocation for food and basic needs in social welfare residential institutions, increasing 'diet and cosmetic charges' for students by approximately 40%. This enhancement will benefit over 765,000 students, with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directing officials to introduce a new nutritious diet within 10 days, a change welcomed as a Diwali gift.
- Telangana has banned the production, storage, and sale of unmarked mayonnaise made from raw eggs due to health risks associated with harmful bacteria and adulterants. Dr. C Sivaleela from the state food safety wing highlights concerns about food poisoning and infections stemming from unregulated mayonnaise often found in street food and smaller eateries.

Uttar Pradesh

- Static Surveillance Teams (SST) and Flying Squad Teams (FST) have been formed for the Sisamau assembly byelection to enforce the model code of conduct and prevent electoral malpractices. Recent inspections conducted by these teams found no violations regarding cash limits or prohibited materials.
- The deadline for the second phase of the Computer Training Scheme 2024-25 has been extended to Nov 10, with training set to begin on Nov 25. This extension, announced by UP minister Narendra Kashyap, aims to involve more OBC unemployed youth in 'O' level and 'CCC' computer courses.

Upcoming News/Events

Madhya Pradesh

- The Indore Development Authority plans to construct a new 600m flyover at Bada Ganapati Square to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance airport connectivity, with a budget of around Rs 28 crore and an 18-month completion deadline. This project, initially shelved due to the Metro's launch, is expected to significantly reduce the daily traffic of approximately 1 lakh vehicles in the area.
- Madhya Pradesh Industrial Development Corporation is proposing a new industrial belt in Neemuch, spanning 126 hectares, to attract investments in textiles and garments. This initiative aims to enhance economic development and expand the region's industrial land bank.

Mumbai

- The Santacruz Chembur Link Road (SCLR) Extension project is nearly complete, with only 100 meters of the cable-stayed bridge left to install. The remaining segment is expected to open to the public on January 1, 2025, following necessary traffic police approvals for installation phases.
- Four stations on India's first bullet train route, connecting Mumbai and Ahmedabad, will undergo significant development under the SMART plan. The initiative aims to enhance connectivity by integrating metro, bus, and taxi services at Virar, Thane, Sabarmati, and Surat, while promoting economic growth through Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) principles.

Pune

- Maharashtra's state school education department plans to reduce teacher posts in aided military schools from 1,014 to 756. The revised policy proposes a new staffing ratio of 1.5 teachers per batch for classes 6 to 10 and two teachers per batch for classes 11 to 12, impacting schools like the Satara Military School.

Punjab

- Punjab and Haryana officials raised concerns at the Northern Zonal Council meeting about the increasing number of UT cadre officials and the decreasing representation of Haryana Civil Services (HCS) and Punjab Civil Services (PCS) in Chandigarh administration. Both states sent a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding this issue, noting the shift of key responsibilities to UT cadre officials.

Rajasthan

- Japan seeks to recruit nurses from Rajasthan to address a significant shortage in nursing care professionals, projected at 290,000 by 2025. The Rajasthan Nursing Council is compiling a list of eligible candidates for five-year contracts, with selected nurses undergoing Japanese language training before deployment.

Tamil Nadu

- Residents experienced cloudy skies and light rain in Chennai, with the Nungambakkam observatory recording 1 cm of rainfall. The IMD predicts light to moderate rain for the next two days, with increased intensity possible as a weather system approaches the Bay of Bengal next week.

Telangana

- The Telangana government will acquire 420 acres to build a 20-km six-lane road for improved connectivity to the Young India Skill University and Future City, linking them to the Outer Ring Road and Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority has proposed nine radial roads, including this one, to enhance regional connectivity.
- Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has instructed university vice-chancellors in Telangana to conduct comprehensive evaluations to improve education and research standards. He emphasized restoring institutional reputation and preventing drug issues on campuses, promising stringent actions for any misconduct.

Uttar Pradesh

- To manage the expected influx of over 40 crore devotees for Maha Kumbh 2025, a new Rs 495 crore railway bridge over the Ganga will enhance travel between Varanasi and Prayagraj. The railway authorities are also increasing train services and station capacity to accommodate about 10 crore pilgrims arriving by train.
- The Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) will take over maintenance of industrial clusters from the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation, pending government approval. This shift is intended to leverage UPSIDA's expertise in managing the unique needs of industrial areas, including sewer and waste management.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- Nigeria charged 76 people, including 30 minors, with treason following August protests against economic reforms. Amnesty International reports 13 deaths in clashes, while a rights group says minors remain detained since the protests.
- Ivory Coast's Wautabouna Ouattara joins the IMF's executive board as the third director for Sub-Saharan Africa, boosting the region's representation in IMF policymaking. This addition marks the board's first expansion since 1992.

America

- Brazil's foreign ministry expressed surprise over Venezuela's "offensive tone" amid a diplomatic row, sparked by Venezuela's recall of its ambassador over alleged "interventionist" statements by Brazil. Tensions have escalated following Venezuela's contested July presidential election.
- An explosion at a Simec steel plant in Tlaxcala, Mexico, killed at least 12 workers after a liquid steel spill likely caused by a collapsed smelting apparatus. Authorities are investigating, with initial reports suggesting molten steel contact with water triggered the blast.

China

- China's tech industry faces uncertainty over the U.S. election outcome, with executives viewing a Trump win as potentially more disruptive than a Harris presidency due to his unpredictable approach, which could bring either relief or intensified sanctions.
- China and Slovakia agreed to enhance trade and investment ties during Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's visit to Beijing, emphasizing the need for peace in Ukraine. President Xi Jinping encouraged Chinese firms to invest in Slovakia and announced plans for cooperation in energy, transport, and green technology.

Europe

- Spain's deadliest flash floods have claimed at least 214 lives, with many still missing, following torrential rains in the Valencia region. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced the deployment of an additional 5,000 army troops to assist with search and cleanup efforts, on top of 2,500 already on the ground.
- Rescue workers in Novi Sad, Serbia, are searching through debris after a roof collapse at a railway station resulted in 14 fatalities. The incident involved a 35-meter section of roofing that collapsed around noon on a clear day, prompting the use of cranes and bulldozers to aid in the rescue efforts.

Middle East

- Rockets launched from Lebanon injured 11 people in central Israel on Saturday 2 November, striking a house and intensifying fears for a ceasefire amid ongoing tensions. Residents described a chaotic scene with dust and screams, but fortunately, no fatalities were reported.
- Israel's military has updated its Home Front Command's defensive guidelines, raising the alert level in the Lower Galilee and southern Golan regions from "partial" to "full." Additionally, it has eased restrictions, allowing gatherings of up to 2,000 people in certain communities amid ongoing hostilities with Hezbollah.

Pakistan

- A blast in southwestern Pakistan killed at least seven people, including five school students, and injured 23 others, targeting a police van near a girls' school in Mastung. The attack, caused by an improvised explosive device on a motorcycle, coincides with a rise in militant violence and ongoing polio vaccination efforts amid increasing cases of the disease.
- Lahore's air pollution hit a record high, with PM2.5 levels exceeding 1,067, over 80 times the World Health Organization's safe limit. The city's pollution crisis is attributed to diesel fumes, agricultural burning, and seasonal fog.

United Kingdom

- Kemi Badenoch becomes the first Black woman to lead the UK Conservatives, emphasizing a shift away from the political center. She argues the party must return to its traditional principles after straying towards the left.

United States

- The U.S. State Department approved a potential \$941 million sale of F-16 fighter jet equipment and support to Argentina, with Lockheed Martin as the principal contractor, the Pentagon announced.
- Two people died and six were injured in a shooting during Halloween festivities in downtown Orlando, Florida. A teenage suspect has been arrested, and the injured victims are reported to be in stable condition.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- Mauritius' communications regulator ordered a social media suspension until Nov. 11, citing national security concerns amid leaked recordings involving political figures, while the opposition claims it's a tactic to sway the upcoming election.
- Nigeria faces a severe hunger crisis, with 33 million projected to be food insecure by next year, driven by economic hardship, high inflation, and rising food and transport costs, according to a government and UN report.

America

- Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum confirmed her attendance at the G20 summit in Brazil, marking her first international trip since taking office, a shift from her predecessor's policy of limited travel. Sheinbaum plans to return to Mexico on Nov. 19.
- Bolivian President Luis Arce urged an end to costly highway blockades organized by supporters of former President Evo Morales, which have lasted 17 days, injured 70 people, and cost over \$1.7 billion. Arce warned of further measures if blockades persist.

China

- China will allow visa-free entry for citizens from nine additional countries, including South Korea, Norway, and Finland, starting Nov. 8, 2024. The policy permits stays of up to 15 days for various purposes and will remain in effect until Dec. 31, 2025.
- China's commerce ministry announced that the European Union will send representatives to negotiate price commitments in the electric vehicle tariff dispute. The ministry expressed hope for pragmatic and balanced discussions to achieve a mutually acceptable solution following intensive communications.

Europe

- Moldova has accused Russia of intending to disrupt expatriate voting in the upcoming presidential runoff. Pro-Western incumbent Maia Sandu is set to face off against former prosecutor general Alexandr Stoiianoglo, who is supported by the pro-Russian Socialist Party.
- The foreign ministers of North Korea and Russia reiterated their commitment to a June agreement between their leaders, according to North Korean state media. This meeting comes amid growing concerns over North Korea's military involvement in Russia's war in Ukraine, with NATO and other nations confirming the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia's Kursk region.

Middle East

- Senior officials from the rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas are convening in Cairo to discuss the establishment of a committee for Gaza's post-war governance. This meeting is part of Egypt's efforts to mediate a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and to facilitate humanitarian access to the region.
- The Israeli cabinet approves a wartime budget package with tax hikes and spending cuts to fund military operations as the conflict continues. The finance ministry has lowered the 2024 growth forecast to 0.4% due to the war's economic impact and worker shortages.

Pakistan

- Pakistan's central bank is expected to further cut its key interest rate from 17.5% during its upcoming policy meeting as inflation decreases and economic activity stabilizes. Analysts predict a reduction ranging from 150 to 250 basis points, following a \$7 billion IMF facility approval aimed at restoring economic stability.
- Pakistan is set to begin the bidding process to privatize a majority stake (51-100%) in the financially struggling Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). This marks the country's first major privatization in over a decade, aimed at raising funds and reforming state-owned enterprises as part of a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund program.

United Kingdom

- Britain's economy is projected to grow by 2.0% next year, according to Finance Minister Rachel Reeves, citing new forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). The growth outlook for 2024 is upgraded to 1.1%, with further expansions of 1.8% in 2026 and 1.5% in 2027.

United States

- Washington state's governor has activated some National Guard members to stand by due to concerns about potential violence related to the 2024 election. With early voting underway, over 2 million ballots have already been cast in a state where polling indicates Democrat Kamala Harris is expected to defeat Republican Donald Trump.
- Ten U.S. states called on the federal government to strengthen its position at the upcoming U.N. negotiations for a global plastic treaty, advocating for production caps and rejecting ineffective recycling methods while emphasizing the protection of communities impacted by plastic production.

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