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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- The Vijayawada West Bypass project faces protests from Jakkampudi farmers over low-height HT power line towers, citing land devaluation and livelihood disruption. Farmers demand design revisions and stall construction despite NHAI's April 2025 deadline.
- Andhra Pradesh reported 28 Wildlife Protection Act offenses from 2014 to 2022, with cases of wildlife smuggling, including pangolins, on the rise. Activists highlight increased poaching along the Andhra-Odisha border for illegal trade in scales and exotic food markets.

Delhi

- LG VK Saxena rejected GGSIPU's proposal to impose affiliation fees on government institutes, citing concerns over increased student fees and potential harm to disadvantaged students. He urged the university to explore alternative revenue-generation methods.
- A low-intensity blast in Delhi's Prashant Vihar injured a three-wheeler driver, prompting police to cordon off the area and recover suspicious white powder. The incident occurred near the site of last month's CRPF school explosion, where investigations remain inconclusive.

Goa

- An expert committee has started surveying villages identified as eco-sensitive areas (ESA) in Goa, with the state government requesting the removal of 21 villages from the list. The committee will assess topographical data and meet with the government to finalize the revised list.

Gujarat

- Gujarat Gas has increased CNG prices by Rs 1.5, making the new rate Rs 77.76 per kg from December 1. Over four lakh CNG vehicle users in south Gujarat, including auto-rickshaws and school vans, will be impacted.
- Gujarat has introduced stricter protocols for hospitals under PMJAY and MA schemes, requiring audio-video consent for specific procedures. Hospitals must upload angiography and angioplasty recordings to a portal for monitoring.

Haryana

- Stage 3 of GRAP, which came into effect on Friday 29 November, removed nearly 4 lakh BS III and BS IV vehicles from roads in major NCR cities. While enforcement was strict, commuters urged the state government to improve public transport to avoid inconvenience.
- In Gurgaon, MCG launched a sanitation drive with 19 officers overseeing 35 wards to ensure proper waste disposal. The initiative follows the SWEEP program, focusing on improving garbage management and public awareness.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh experienced its driest November since 1901, with only 0.2 mm rainfall, a 99% deficiency against the 19.7 mm average. Light rain/snowfall is forecast for isolated regions, while most areas remain dry in the coming week.
- Trekking above 3,000 meters and paragliding near the Dhauladhar range in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, have been restricted for public safety due to harsh winter conditions. Low-altitude trekking requires prior SP permission, with weather monitoring in place.
- The expansion of Kangra Airport at Gaggal faces delays as the state awaits the Centre's clearance for forest land diversion and the techno-economic feasibility report (TEFR). Additionally, the obstacle limitation surface survey remains under review by the competent authority.

Karnataka

The Karnataka cabinet approved upgrading 500 government schools into Karnataka Public Schools by 2029, allocating ₹2,500 crore, including ₹2,000 crore from ADB. It also amended the Ground Water Act, imposing stricter penalties for uncapped borewells to prevent child accidents.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- EPACK Prefab set a record with India's fastest-built structure at Tirupati, investing Rs. 305 crore across phases to boost capacity and jobs. The plant aims to expand globally, focusing on South India's growing industrial potential.
- CM N. Chandrababu Naidu warned of strict action against PDS rice smugglers and illegal sand miners, emphasizing the government's anti-mafia stance. He highlighted distributing Rs 18,000 crore in social welfare pensions and significant investments in Rayalaseema irrigation projects.

Delhi

- The Delhi Cabinet extended the EV policy till March 2025 to restore subsidies and road tax exemptions for EV buyers, effective January 1, 2024. It also approved ₹17 crore funding for the SC/ST/OBC Corporation and established an optometry training wing at Guru Nanak Eye Centre.
- Over 8,000 CCTV cameras will be installed in Lodhi Colony, Jor Bagh, and nearby areas using MLA-LAD funds, with each locality having 900-1,100 cameras. The ₹95-98 lakh projects include bullet cameras, barricades, and automated gates, aiming for completion within 30 days post-contractor finalization.

Goa

- Goa's tourism department is finalizing the Wed-in-Goa policy, offering a single-window approval system for beach weddings. It will designate four zones for weddings, aiming to boost tourism by simplifying permissions and providing the necessary infrastructure.

Gujarat

- The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has initiated third-party inspections of sewage treatment plants (STPs) to ensure water quality following public concerns. Weekly samples will be analyzed by the Gujarat Environment Management Institute (GEMI) under Gujarat Pollution Control Board standards.
- Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel announced plans for an overbridge at Alkapuri, Vadodara, to replace the flood-prone railway underpass. The project, discussed since the 1960s, aims to solve frequent flooding issues.

Haryana

- Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini launched a confidential reward program for reporting tax evasion and drug smuggling, with a Rs 2 crore fund for whistleblowers. The initiative includes an online portal for reporting drug peddling and stricter penalties for illicit liquor smuggling.
- Badshapur MLA Rao Narbir Singh urged officials to address civic issues raised by RWAs near Dwarka Expressway and announced Rs 10 lakh development funds for societies meeting 80% property tax compliance. He also encouraged residents to self-certify documents for quicker resolutions.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh plans to make Bilaspur a water tourism hub by introducing parasailing at Govind Sagar Lake. Trial operations, starting in December, will be conducted by a Delhi-based company, with permanent operations contingent on expert review and regulatory approval.
- Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced efforts to expedite formalities under the "Come and Install Solar Power Projects" initiative, promoting private solar energy projects. The initiative aims to boost green energy, generate employment, and support environmental conservation in the state.

Karnataka

- Karnataka's Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi stated that the Congress high command would decide on changing the KPCC president. He emphasized the need for a full-time leader to strengthen the party's position for the 2028 elections, with discussions involving CM Siddaramaiah, DyCM Shivakumar, and the high command.

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Madhya Pradesh

- The NTCA has approved Madhav National Park in Shivpuri as Madhya Pradesh's 9th Tiger Reserve, spanning 1,751 sq km, with tiger reintroduction efforts already showing success through recent cub births. The move aims to boost wildlife conservation, ecotourism, and regional development.

Mumbai

- Mumbai recorded its lowest November temperature since 2016 at 16.8°C, according to the IMD's Santacruz observatory. Cooler conditions are expected, with a forecast of 17°C minimum and 33°C maximum on Wednesday 27 November.
- The BMC achieved a milestone in the Mumbai Coastal Road Project with the launch of the final girder connecting it to the Bandra-Worli Sea Link. With 94% progress, the bridge is expected to open for traffic by mid-January 2025 after final works.

Pune

- The Mahavitaran Abhay Yojana 2024, offering interest and late fee waivers on overdue electricity bills, has been extended until December 31, 2024. Since its launch, 65,445 consumers statewide have benefited, contributing Rs 86 crore, with Nagpur Division leading with 20,400 beneficiaries.
- The first Joint Tabletop Exercise, CINBAX, between the Indian and Cambodian Armies began on December 1, 2024, in Pune. It focuses on improving coordination in Counter-Terrorism operations and strategic decision-making.

Punjab

- Punjab's air quality has worsened, with Ludhiana and Mandi Gobindgarh recording the worst AQI of 271, categorized as poor. Stubble burning cases have reduced, with 77 reported on Sunday, bringing the season total to 10,682.
- Two drones and 570 grams of heroin were recovered near the India-Pakistan border in Amritsar. The drones are presumed to have crashed due to countermeasures aimed at curbing smuggling.

Rajasthan

- The Rajasthan Cabinet approved the "Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2024," targeting conversions through fraud or force. It proposes severe punishments and invalidation of marriages intended for unlawful conversions.
- The Centre has sanctioned Rs 1,154 crore for 27 road projects and Rs 30 crore for a railway under-bridge in Sriganganagar, aiming to enhance infrastructure in Rajasthan. The funds will be used to develop roads across 17 districts, boosting transportation, trade, tourism, and agriculture.

Tamil Nadu

- TNFRS rescued 25 people, including a dog named Jimmy, from floodwaters in Urapakkam, following a distress call. The team, with 70 personnel on alert, used boats and specialized equipment for further rescue operations.

Telangana

- The Telangana government withdrew its proposal to acquire land for a pharma village in Vikarabad district, replacing it with plans for an industrial corridor for textile production. This follows violent protests in Lagacherla and a decision by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath unveiled a statue of Gond queen Rani Durgavati in Banda and visited BJP leader Chandrashekhar Tiwari's home to offer condolences. He also planned to visit Mahua village and Chitrakoot after the ceremony.
- Four PWD engineers and an unnamed Google Maps official have been booked after three men died when their car fell off an under-construction bridge in Bareilly. The incident occurred while following directions from the app.
- Sambhal district administration issued Prohibitory Orders on November 30, 2024, restricting outsiders from visiting until December 10. This decision coincided with a planned visit by a 15-member Samajwadi Party delegation to investigate violence during a survey at Shahi Jama Masjid.

Upcoming News/Events

Madhya Pradesh

- The Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA) reports a 24% rise in soybean meal exports for the 2023-24 oil year, reaching 22.75 lakh tonnes, up from 18.36 lakh tonnes last year, driven by strong international demand and favorable pricing. Peak exports were recorded in January at 2.75 lakh tonnes.

Mumbai

- The Mumbai Metro 3 Aqua Line, spanning 33.5 km from Colaba to SEEPZ with 27 stations, aims for full operation by May 2025, officials say. Phase 1 from Aarey to BKC began in October, with Phase 2 nearly 90% complete but facing local challenges.
- A technical glitch at BMC's Pise village water supply plant has led to a 10% water cut in Mumbai, suburbs, Thane, and Bhiwandi from December 1-5. Repairs are underway, and citizens are advised to conserve water.

Pune

- Following the collapse of a statue in Sindhudurg, Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has initiated structural audits of city statues, identifying 25 older ones for detailed inspection. Advanced methods like Ultrasonic Tomography Testing (UST) will assess internal strength without causing damage, particularly for statues over 40 years old.
- The Pune Metro Line-3 project, linking Hinjewadi to Shivajinagar, is now set for completion by March 2025, with 60% of work done. Developed under a Tata Group PPP with PMRDA, the project faces challenges in busy areas, raising concerns over meeting the extended timeline.

Punjab

- Farmer leaders, including Satnam Singh Pannu and Surinder Singh Chautala, will lead the first group of protesters marching towards Delhi on December 6. The protest will stop at several locations in Haryana before reaching Delhi.
- The 10 acres of land proposed for Haryana's new assembly in Chandigarh, as per the Master Plan-2031, is designated for augmenting health infrastructure, not for large projects.

Rajasthan

- No scheduled traffic diversions are planned for VVIP movements during the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit, but temporary stoppages and parking restrictions may occur. Senior officials and extra police forces will manage traffic around key venues from December 8 to 10.
- RPSC will implement a biometric system for candidate verification, starting with interviews and later extending to written exams.

Tamil Nadu

- The Centre urged Tamil Nadu to reconsider rejecting the Prime Minister's Vishwakarma Scheme, citing its inclusive goals to uplift traditional artisans. Tamil Nadu, however, expressed concerns over caste-based discrimination and proposed its own initiative.

Telangana

- Telangana BJP thanked the Union government for Rs 73.74 crore for the Ramappa Tourism Circuit and Rs 68.10 crore for the Somasila Retreat project. The funds aim to boost tourism and create local job opportunities.
- Telangana is set to remove the two-child norm for rural local body candidates, following Andhra Pradesh's move. A bill to amend the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act will be tabled in the upcoming assembly session.

Uttar Pradesh

- Ahead of the 2025 Mahakumbh, authorities have made five pontoon bridges operational and aim to complete 19 by December 10. The remaining 11 will be completed after dredging work, with a focus on quality and safety.
- UP Energy Minister A.K. Sharma reviewed the progress of the PM Surya Ghar Free Electricity Scheme, aiming for 75,000 solar plants in Varanasi. He set a target of 10,000 plants by December 2024 and directed promotional efforts through hoardings and updated applications.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- Senegal marks 80 years since the massacre of African soldiers by French troops, who shot them for demanding fair treatment and pay after serving in World War II. The incident remains a dark chapter in colonial history, with calls for justice and recognition continuing.
- President Joe Biden visits Angola to promote a U.S.-backed railway connecting the DRC, Zambia, and Angola, aimed at reducing China's influence in critical minerals. China counters with a rival eastern railway, reviving competition in the region.

America

- Peru appoints Jorge Montero as Minister of Mines and Energy after Romulo Mucho's removal amid protests by small-scale miners demanding a two-year permit extension. Demonstrations have disrupted traffic across southern Peru.
- Costa Rica has been invited to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade bloc, which would grant preferential trade access to markets like Japan, Australia, and Vietnam. Authorities will negotiate terms and undergo evaluation by current members.

China

- China and Russia conducted their ninth joint strategic air patrol over the Sea of Japan on Friday, 29 November, showcasing deepened military cooperation, according to Chinese state broadcaster CCTV.
- China has eased visa restrictions for Shenzhen residents visiting Hong Kong, allowing multiple entries per year from Dec. 1. The move is expected to benefit tourism-related industries in Hong Kong.

Europe

- Torrential rains caused flooding on Greece's Rhodes island, forcing vehicle bans and evacuations, while Storm Bora continued to impact the country. A man died in flash floods on another island, and Rhodes saw severe damage to homes and businesses.
- Protests in Georgia continued for a fourth night, with opposition spreading across the country after the government suspended EU membership talks. Thousands of demonstrators clashed with police, blocking roads and expressing anger over anti-Western policies.

Middle East

- Russian and Syrian jets intensified bombing of Syria's northwest, with insurgents advancing into Aleppo, challenging President Bashar al-Assad's forces. The conflict marks the largest threat to Assad in years.
- Saudi Arabia has shifted from seeking a defense treaty with the U.S. to a modest military cooperation agreement. Recognition of Israel is now conditional on concrete steps toward a Palestinian state.

Pakistan

- Sectarian clashes in Pakistan's Kurram district have left over 130 dead despite a ceasefire attempt. Tensions between Sunnis and Shias, fueled by long-standing tribal rivalries, continue to escalate, with authorities struggling to mediate peace.
- Pakistani authorities arrested nearly 1,000 Imran Khan supporters who stormed Islamabad to demand his release. Khan's aides claimed many protesters were injured, and thousands were detained during the clashes.

United Kingdom

- UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer appointed Heidi Alexander as transport minister after Louise Haigh resigned over a decade-old criminal offense. This follows a drop in Labour's approval ratings due to recent tax hikes.
- A new case of the mpox variant clade Ib has been detected in England, bringing the total to five cases in recent weeks. The individual, who recently returned from Uganda, is receiving specialist care, though the overall risk to the population remains low.

United States

- U.S. President-elect Donald Trump named Lebanese American businessman Massad Boulos as senior adviser on Arab and Middle Eastern affairs. Boulos, father-in-law of Tiffany Trump, has strong ties in Lebanese politics and Arab American communities.
- Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed the Protect All Students Act, prohibiting students from using bathrooms and locker rooms that do not align with their biological gender. The law also restricts transgender students' overnight accommodations and follows similar measures in other states.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- Kenyan President William Ruto and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni have pledged to mediate between Ethiopia and Somalia amid tensions over Ethiopia's plan to build a port in Somaliland. The dispute has geopolitical implications, drawing Somalia closer to Ethiopia's adversaries, Egypt and Eritrea.
- Ghana risks a government shutdown early next year as parliament is unlikely to pass a provisional budget before the Dec. 7 election. Former finance minister Seth Terkper warns of lean government spending or cutbacks on interest payments and transition funding if a budget isn't approved in December.

America

- Peru's Congress extends REINFO, a temporary permit scheme for small-scale miners, by six months despite government concerns about its misuse fueling illegal mining. The extension follows protests and the removal of Energy Minister Romulo Mucho.
- Mexico's Senate approves a reform to abolish autonomous regulatory bodies, including Cofece, IFT, and INAI, transferring their functions to government ministries. Critics argue it threatens transparency and sector independence.

China

- China condemned the U.S. for approving a \$385 million arms sale to Taiwan and arranging President Lai Ching-te's transit through U.S. territories. China vowed "resolute countermeasures" against the actions.
- China urged the U.S. to exercise caution regarding Taiwan relations ahead of President Lai Ching-te's visit to Hawaii and Guam. The U.S. reiterated its position that such transits are routine and consistent with its One-China policy.

Europe

- Zelenskiy urged Biden to rally support for Ukraine's NATO membership as Ukraine faces a Russian offensive and uncertainty about U.S. policy under Trump.
- French Finance Minister Antoine Armand acknowledged the 2025 budget could improve but resisted far-right demands. Marine Le Pen's National Rally is pushing for changes to secure support for Prime Minister Barnier's government.

Middle East

- Iran plans to install over 6,000 extra uranium-enriching centrifuges, increasing enrichment capacity, which could raise nuclear proliferation risks. However, the new centrifuges will initially be set to enrich at 5% purity, potentially signaling a conciliatory move.
- OPEC+ is considering postponing its planned oil output hike in January 2025 due to global demand slowdown. Further discussions on the issue will take place ahead of the group's meeting on December 5.

Pakistan

- Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plans to resume European flights soon after the EU lifted its ban. The airline is also seeking approval to restart UK routes, beginning with Paris in the next few weeks.
- Authorities in Sindh, Pakistan, have formed a joint interrogation team to investigate two suspects linked to the October suicide attack on a Chinese convoy near Karachi Airport. The attack, claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army, killed two Chinese engineers and one Pakistani national.

United Kingdom

- UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer will unveil detailed policy targets next week on economic growth, healthcare, crime, and green energy. This comes as his party nears five months in power.
- UK Finance Minister Rachel Reeves has delayed the multi-year spending review from spring 2025 to June due to challenging trade-offs in investing in sectors like healthcare. This follows her announcement of significant tax increases to address public service issues.

United States

- Wisconsin Democratic chief Ben Wikler has announced his bid for DNC chair as the party aims to recover from its losses in the November election.
- U.S. President-elect Donald Trump demanded that BRICS countries pledge not to create or support a currency to replace the U.S. dollar, threatening 100% tariffs for non-compliance. Trump emphasized that any country attempting to replace the dollar would lose access to the U.S. economy.

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