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Our Head Office : 110/1A & 110/2B, Ansec House, Tank Road, Yerwada, Pune, Maharashtra - 411006

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- Students from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana secured 56% of US student visas issued to Indians, driven by strong STEM-focused education infrastructure. Rising NRI support networks and prospects for better job opportunities fuel this trend.
- Andhra Pradesh's GSDP for 2023-24 is ₹1,439,674 crore, showing a 10.44% growth at current prices but a 3% decline from the previous year's growth rate. At constant prices, the state achieved 7.35% growth, surpassing India's GDP growth of 5.81%.

Delhi

- The Supreme Court rebuked the Delhi Tree Authority (DTA) for not conducting a mandatory tree census under the Delhi Tree Preservation Act. The bench, led by Justice Abhay S. Oka, indicated plans to establish an expert panel to review tree-felling proposals, citing DTA's lack of expertise.
- The National Green Tribunal fined the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) ₹25.22 crore each for failing to prevent pollution in stormwater drains and the Yamuna. DJB was criticized for connecting sewage to stormwater drains, while MCD faced penalties for altering drains and contributing to river pollution.

Goa

- The government has relaxed loudspeaker restrictions from 10 PM to midnight for IFFI, Christmas, and New Year celebrations. The relaxation applies till November 26, and from December 24-26 and December 31.
- The Goa government has reduced lottery prize money to 40% of sales revenue, down from 50%, aligning with practices in other states. The move, under amended Goa Lotteries (Regulation) Rules, 2003, aims to boost state-sponsored lottery revenue, currently at ₹10 crore annually.

Gujarat

- The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation issued 110 notices and sealed nine establishments for littering violations, collecting fines of ₹1.28 lakh. Seized items included 2.5 kg of prohibited plastic, with businesses and food joints in Navrangpura and Mithakhali targeted.
- Gujarat, despite being a leader in MSMEs, has underutilized central government grants. As of June 2024, only ₹0.66 crore of ₹5 crore for SIP was used, and no funds from ₹47.06 crore under RAMP have been utilized.

Haryana

- Haryana Police uncovered a global captcha-filling scam involving two companies, PCL and Money Earn 24, defrauding 35,000 people out of Rs 18 crore. Three individuals were arrested after a raid in Rohtak, revealing a deceptive scheme charging participants Rs 5,000 for fake job offers.
- India's first Constitution Museum, inaugurated at OP Jindal Global University, showcases a photolithographic copy of the Constitution and a 360-degree visual experience. The museum honors Constituent Assembly members with 300 sculptured busts and features a hologram of Dr. BR Ambedkar.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh High Court has restrained the state government from altering the use of 112 hectares of land transferred to the tourism department. The court directed no permanent construction or land use changes during the pendency of the petition filed by the Agriculture Teachers Association.

Karnataka

- Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has boosted its daily profit to Rs 2.8 crore, driven by extended services and the Shakti scheme. The rural and urban divisions have added 160 buses, with a rise in passenger demand from students and the free ride initiative for women.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has suspended uranium exploration in Kurnool's Kappatralla forest due to environmental and health concerns raised by locals. The decision, announced after protests, halts Atomic Minerals Directorate's planned operations permanently.
- The World Bank and Asian Development Bank will each provide \$800 million for Amaravati's development, with the remaining amount funded by the Andhra Pradesh government and the Centre. Final agreements are set to be signed, marking a significant step for the inclusive and sustainable capital city project.

Delhi

- Authorities informed the NGT that the sealing of unauthorized borewells in Paharganj hotels and guesthouses will continue. The tribunal questioned the authenticity of a Voluntary Disclosure Scheme cited by the hotels and urged the Delhi government to investigate.
- Delhi's transport department aims to install cameras at 400 fuel stations by December to identify vehicles without valid Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates. With 189 cameras already operational, over 43,000 challans have been issued, and violators face a ₹10,000 fine amid rising air quality concerns.

Goa

- Goa's tourism delegation, led by Minister Rohan Khaunte, attended the Tashkent Fair to strengthen ties and promote holistic tourism. Direct Tashkent-Goa flights and discussions on sustainable tourism aim to boost mutual growth.
- Goa's FDA will inspect restaurants statewide after multiple complaints of unsanitary conditions, especially in coastal areas. Health Minister Vishwajit Rane announced FSSAI-audited inspections to ensure food safety, sanitation, and staff hygiene standards.

Gujarat

- The Great Green Wall of Gujarat (GGWG), a 20,000-hectare mangrove bio-shield project, has been recognized as an 'Impact Maker' by UNFCCC. The initiative, spanning 2023-2053, aims to enhance ecological resilience and economic stability for 1.3 lakh coastal residents, addressing climate change challenges.
- Nylon weavers in Surat have urged the Union textiles ministry's committee and BIS to assess the impact of the upcoming Quality Control Order (QCO) for nylon. Surat, producing 22 lakh metres of nylon daily, seeks clarity after the QCO for polyester raised concerns.

Haryana

- After 14 months, the Haryana Human Rights Commission will finally have a chairperson and two members, with the empowered committee under Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini finalizing the appointments. The commission's work had stalled due to the vacancies, causing a backlog of complaints.
- Gurgaon's water supply will be centralized by 2026 under the CIWMS, integrating key pipelines. Phase 3 of the project, costing Rs 26.8 crore, will cover 405 underground water tanks and be completed in 12 months.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh High Court has allowed nine hotels run by the Tourism Development Corporation to operate until March 30, 2025, modifying its earlier order. This decision comes after the Corporation's request, considering advance bookings and financial earnings from these hotels.

Karnataka

- The government, in collaboration with SELCO Foundation, launched the 'Saura Swasthya' initiative to solarize over 5,000 healthcare facilities. With 1,152 facilities already solarized, Raichur district leads as the first to have all its health centers powered by solar energy, aiming to cut electricity bills by 70% and save over Rs 100 crore in the next decade.

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Madhya Pradesh

- Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava supported CM Mohan Yadav's decision to dismantle the city's BRTS system, citing growing traffic and future infrastructure needs. The state government plans to build 4-5 bridges on AB Road to ease congestion, with a feasibility study already underway.

Mumbai-

- In the Maharashtra assembly elections, the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance secured 22 of Mumbai's 36 seats, with the BJP winning 15. Notable wins included Kalidas Kolambkar's ninth consecutive term, while the MNS, including Amit Thackeray, struggled, with the Shiv Sena (UBT) securing key victories like Varun Sardesai's debut win in Vandre East.
- The ED's probe into Chinese loan apps reveals multi-crore laundering through crypto wallets, with funds routed overseas. These apps exploit borrowers with high interest rates and harassment tactics.

Pune

- Congress faced a complete rout in Pune district, losing all 21 assembly constituencies, marking a sharp decline in its influence in western Maharashtra. Internal dissent and rebel candidates further aided BJP's dominance in the region.
- The MPCB Pune office has issued interim directions to a Wadgaonsheri developer for non-compliance with pollution regulations. The developer must comply within 15 days or face legal action under the Water and Air Pollution Acts.

Punjab

- The Amritsar administration has launched measures to decongest Heritage Street, improve visitor experience, and preserve its cultural significance. Plans include traffic management, anti-exploitation measures for tourists, and renovation of the historic Jassa Singh Ahluwalia Gate.

Rajasthan

- Garlic prices in Rajasthan have surged to ₹400-₹600/kg due to crop damage caused by prolonged monsoon and heavy rains. Reduced production in key areas like Kota, Baran, Bundi, and Jodhpur has intensified the scarcity.
- The November 13 by-poll results for seven assembly seats in Rajasthan show BJP winning five seats (Jhunjhunu, Ramgarh, Deoli-Uniara, Salumber, and Khinwasar), Congress securing Dausa, and Bharat Adivasi Party winning Chorasi. The bypolls, triggered by MLAs vacating seats after Lok Sabha wins, serve as a crucial test for both BJP and Congress ahead of state elections.

Tamil Nadu

- Tiruvallur district's maternal mortality rate (MMR) of 26 and infant mortality rate (IMR) of 5.7 are significantly lower than the state averages. The district's success is attributed to effective health measures, aiming to reduce maternal deaths to zero in the coming years.
- The Indian Navy, alongside central and state agencies, successfully conducted the Sea Vigil 2024 exercise, neutralizing simulated terrorist threats on Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts. The two-day exercise included a hostage situation aboard MV Fairway, with MARCOS commandos airlifted for a rescue operation.

Telangana

- Telangana ranked among the top 10 states in CSR contributions, with a 48% rise to Rs 1,007 crore in 2022-23. This marks a significant increase since its debut in the top 10 during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Telangana's Civil Supplies Minister reaffirmed the state's commitment to promoting electric vehicles (EVs) to combat urban pollution. At the launch of the 'E-Raja L-5 Segment Electric Auto,' he stressed the need for both immediate and long-term measures to address worsening air quality.

Uttar Pradesh

- In Sambhal, UP, police used tear gas and baton charges to control a mob during a survey of Shahi Jama Masjid, following claims that it was built over a Hindu temple. The survey, ordered by a local court, documented the site after allegations that Mughal emperor Babar demolished the temple to construct the mosque.

Upcoming News/Events

Madhya Pradesh

- The Khelo MP Youth Games, starting on Dec 13, will feature around 10,000 athletes and include 19 popular sports across district and division levels. The annual event aims to discover and train young talent under 19, with sports ranging from athletics to archery and kayaking.

Mumbai

- Regional carrier FLY91 will launch direct flights between Solapur, Mumbai, and Goa starting December 23. This expands its network to nine destinations, enhancing connectivity for trade, tourism, and pilgrimages.
- Western Railway will launch a new AC local train in Mumbai on December 25, adding 10-12 AC trips to its network. Manufactured by ICF Chennai, it caters to growing demand, with 1.24 lakh daily AC commuters on WR routes.

Pune

- The Ministry of Defence has outlined the process for merging designated cantonment board areas, including Pune, Khadki, and Dehu Road, with municipal bodies. The merger aims to transfer assets and liabilities to municipalities, enabling improved infrastructure and civic amenities.
- Autorickshaw unions in Maharashtra have requested a ₹3 base fare hike to offset the recent ₹2/kg increase in CNG prices. They also anticipate further CNG price hikes and seek an adjustment in per-kilometer fares to mitigate costs.

Punjab

- Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema led an AAP delegation to urge Governor Gulab Chand Kataria not to allot land in Chandigarh to Haryana for its Vidhan Sabha. Cheema emphasized Chandigarh belongs to Punjab and opposed the Centre's reported move to allocate 10 acres for Haryana's assembly building.

Rajasthan

- Avaada Group will invest ₹5,800 crore to develop a 1200MW pumped hydropower storage project in Sirohi district, Rajasthan. This project, aimed at enhancing energy security and sustainability, is expected to create jobs and drive economic growth over the next 5-7 years.
- The Rajasthan Youth Board will showcase extinct arts at this year's State Youth Festival, alongside science, technology, handicrafts, and sports. The inclusion aims to preserve unique traditional forms like ravanahattha, bhapang, Rammat dance, and Manganiyar puppet shows, promoting them for future global recognition.

Tamil Nadu

- The Tamil Nadu government is expanding its Special Area Development Programme (SADP) to 33 blocks in 11 districts, including Kalvarayan hills, starting in 2024-25. The initiative focuses on holistic development and biodiversity conservation, benefiting the tribal population in ecologically sensitive areas of the Eastern Ghats.
- Madurai Corporation has identified 28 sewage discharge spots into the Vaigai River in a survey, following a study by MNCF that flagged 41 points. A detailed project report is being prepared to address underground drainage issues and install sewage treatment plants along the river's stretch.

Telangana

- Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has instructed setting up more petrol pumps in agency areas to boost tribal employment. The initiative also aims to streamline existing pumps for improved profitability and services.
- Telangana's Irrigation Minister announced plans to complete pending irrigation projects, benefiting 30 lakh acres within a year. The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project's packages in Sircilla and Karimnagar will also be expedited to provide irrigation to over 1.50 lakh acres.

Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh cabinet, led by CM Yogi Adityanath, approved roadshows in major cities and abroad to promote India's culture ahead of the 2025 Mahakumbh. The roadshows will be held in countries like Nepal and Thailand, with a budget of ₹20-25 lakh each, in partnership with CII and FICCI.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- Heavy gunfire erupted in South Sudan's capital, Juba, on November 22, 2024, following the arrest of the former head of the National Security Service. A U.N. safety alert was issued to staff members in response to the violence.
- At least nine people, including seven children from one family, died in a landslide in Kabulu village, South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, after heavy rain on Friday 22 November. A local official reported that one resident lost his wife and seven children in the tragedy.

America

- The Bahamas has secured over \$120 million for ocean and mangrove conservation through a debt swap backed by a \$300 million loan from Standard Chartered. This financial move is part of a broader effort to fund environmental protection projects while reducing debt.
- Uruguay holds a closely watched presidential runoff on Sunday 24 November between moderates, capping off a busy year for global elections. The vote comes after a year marked by political activity worldwide.

China

- Following recent mass killings in China, local authorities are increasing safety measures, including police patrols. The focus is on campus safety, especially after the stabbing spree in Wuxi on Nov. 16 and a deadly car attack in Zhuhai on Nov. 11, which killed 35.
- China has expressed willingness to maintain communication with relevant parties to safeguard the security of international submarine infrastructure. This statement came after inquiries about a Chinese ship, Yi Peng 3, in Danish waters, with no mention of the severed fibre-optic cables in the Baltic Sea under investigation by Finland and Sweden.

Europe

- Since July 2023, Russian drone and missile attacks have damaged 321 Ukrainian port infrastructure facilities, President Zelenskiy reported. These strikes have also impacted 20 foreign merchant ships and disrupted Ukraine's crucial food exports, affecting global food prices, especially in Africa.
- Romanians voted on Sunday 24 November, in the first round of the presidential election, with leftist Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu and hard-right politician George Simion leading the race. Ciolacu, favored to win the December 8 run-off, faces Simion, whose popularity, especially among Romanians abroad, could influence the outcome.

Middle East

- The Israeli military issued new evacuation orders for the Shejaia suburb in eastern Gaza City on Sunday 24 November, due to rocket fire from militants in the area. The move led to further displacement of residents, and a Gaza hospital director was reportedly injured in an Israeli drone attack.

Pakistan

- Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, was placed under a security lockdown on Sunday 24 November ahead of protests demanding the release of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Key roads were blocked, mobile services suspended, and security forces deployed, with gatherings banned ahead of planned rallies near the parliament.
- A suicide attack by Islamist militants on a military outpost in northwest Pakistan killed 12 soldiers and damaged nearby infrastructure. The attack, which occurred in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, involved an explosives-laden vehicle, and six militants were reported killed during a subsequent operation.

United Kingdom

- Storm Bert caused widespread disruption across the UK and Ireland on Saturday 23 November, bringing snow, rain, and strong winds. It led to one fatality, transport suspensions, power outages, and road closures, including the Severn Bridge and several railways.

United States

- Japan and the U.S. are preparing a joint military plan for a potential Taiwan emergency, involving missile deployments. The U.S. would position missile units in Japan's Nansei Islands and the Philippines, including HIMARS artillery and a space-cyber-electromagnetic unit in the Philippines.
- Trump has appointed Russ Vought as director of the Office of Management and Budget. Vought will help shape budget priorities and advance Project 2025's conservative policy proposals.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- Morocco's CMGP Group has received approval to launch an IPO on the Casablanca stock exchange, aiming to raise 1.1 billion dirhams (\$110 million). The subscription period for the offering will be from Dec. 2 to Dec. 6.
- Opposition politicians in the Democratic Republic of Congo have called for nationwide protests against President Tshisekedi's plans to revise the constitution, fearing it may remove term limits. Critics, including former president Kabila and candidates Fayulu and Katumbi, argue the changes could allow Tshisekedi to seek another term.

America

- Brazil's Finance Minister announced that the government will freeze \$860 million in 2024 spending while maintaining its primary deficit target. A fiscal package with budget cuts for future years may be unveiled as early as Monday 25 November.
- Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum plans to propose three bills to Congress for implementing a judicial reform that includes direct elections for judges. The reform, passed in September, aims to elect judges, including members of a smaller Supreme Court, within the next few years.

China

- China is open to engaging in constructive dialogue with the U.S. based on mutual respect to strengthen bilateral economic ties. Despite concerns over potential tariffs under President-elect Trump's administration, China remains confident in managing external shocks and continuing stable trade relations.
- China will extend its visa-free arrangements to include Japan, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Montenegro, and others from Nov. 30, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2025. Additionally, the visa-free stay period will increase to 30 days from 15 days for citizens of all 38 countries in the program, aiming to boost tourism and trade.

Europe

- Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law offering debt forgiveness for new recruits to fight in Ukraine, forgiving up to 10 million roubles in arrears for those signing contracts for at least a year. This law, effective from Dec. 1, aims to boost military recruitment by alleviating financial burdens on potential soldiers.
- Germany's new finance minister, Joerg Kukies, confirmed discussions on moderate reforms to the debt brake, a rule limiting the public deficit to 0.35% of GDP. This follows disagreements within the government over spending priorities, particularly in light of the Ukraine war's economic impact.

Middle East

- Iran is set to hold talks with three European powers—Britain, France, and Germany—on its nuclear program on Nov. 29, following a U.N. resolution against Tehran. Despite recent tensions, Iran aims to resolve the nuclear impasse through diplomacy, with a focus on finding a solution before U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration.

Pakistan

- Government officials in northwestern Pakistan met with tribal leaders to mediate a ceasefire following sectarian clashes that have killed 68 people and injured many others. The violence erupted after gunmen targeted Shi'ite Muslim civilians, leading to retaliatory attacks by Sunni groups.
- Pakistan discussed its \$7 billion bailout reform plan with the IMF, focusing on taxation, energy, and privatization of state-owned enterprises. Finance Minister Aurangzeb confirmed no new taxes would be imposed, with a review of reforms expected in early 2025.

United Kingdom

- British home prices are expected to rise 3.1% in 2025 and 4.0% in 2026, outpacing overall inflation, while rents will increase even more, driven by a shortage of rental properties. Despite higher rent squeezing budgets, affordability for first-time homebuyers is expected to improve slightly.

United States

- Trump plans to form investigative teams at the Department of Justice to probe alleged 2020 election fraud in battleground states. He also intends to dismiss the team involved in Special Counsel Jack Smith's investigation.
- Texas Governor Greg Abbott has ordered state agencies to halt investments in China and divest existing assets due to financial and security risks. The move signals rising U.S.-China tensions affecting global capital flows.

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