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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- The Andhra Pradesh cabinet, led by CM Chandrababu Naidu, approved restructuring 11,162 village secretariats and 3,842 ward secretariats for improved governance. Staff readjustments aim to enhance service efficiency at local levels.
- The Union Cabinet, chaired by PM Modi, approved an ₹11,440 crore financial package for Visakhapatnam Steel Plant to address its financial crisis. Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu expressed gratitude for the relief.

Delhi

- The Supreme Court stayed a Delhi HC order directing the AAP government to sign an MoU for the PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Mission. AAP's Arvind Kejriwal welcomed the move, while BJP's J.P. Nadda vowed to implement the scheme if elected in February.
- Delhi's air quality worsened to "severe" with an AQI exceeding 400, prompting CAQM to enforce GRAP Stages 3 and 4. Measures include halting construction, vehicular restrictions, and suspending in-person school classes.

Goa

- 56 bird species in Goa, including critically endangered vultures and bunting, face threats from habitat loss, climate change, and human activities. These species are rare and some are endemic to the Western Ghats.
- The Goa government has launched the Scheme for Financial Assistance to Museums, offering support for new museum establishments and the development of existing ones. The scheme categorizes funding into 'New Museums' for setup and 'Existing Museums' for upgrades and conservation.

Gujarat

- After confirming no ownership records, the Dahod district administration has issued 15-day eviction notices to 58 individuals occupying government land in Sanga Falia. Property owners may appeal the decision following Gujarat High Court directives.
- The Gujarat government aims to boost secondary and tertiary sector workforces to 36% and 34% by 2030, respectively. Plans include doubling ITI seats to 2 lakh, expanding higher education courses, and training 10-16 lakh individuals annually under new skill development initiatives.

Haryana

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed Haryana to submit an action plan addressing industrial effluent pollution in Sonipat's Barhi Industrial Area, where 83% of units are discharging untreated effluents into the Yamuna River.
- Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini announced that the state will provide housing to underprivileged families under the Mukhyamantri Gramin Awasi Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awasi Yojana. Rs 100 crore has been allocated for 100-square-yard plots with financing options through banks for eligible families.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh's fresh snowfall on January 16, 2025, has disrupted travel but boosted winter tourism and apple farming. Road closures, sub-zero temperatures, and frozen pipes are complicating conditions, while the snow benefits soil quality for apple orchards.

Karnataka

- Karnataka govt introduces new rules to ensure transparency in excise department transfers, addressing corruption allegations. The guidelines will streamline transfers and limit executive positions to two consecutive terms.
- Karnataka's higher education minister MC Sudhakar opposes provisions in UGC draft guidelines for vice-chancellor appointments, calling them a threat to federal structure. He urged the Union education minister to withdraw the draft immediately.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- KWDT-II will address the reallocation of Krishna river water between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh under new central terms. Telangana sees this as a key step toward fair water distribution post-2014 bifurcation.
- The Andhra Pradesh government assured the APERC it would cover the ₹14,683 crore revenue deficit of discoms for FY 2025-26, avoiding a power tariff hike. It is also committed to providing an uninterrupted supply of free daytime electricity for agriculture.

Delhi

- Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, RWAs demand greater powers to address civic issues like waterlogging, garbage, and encroachments. They propose becoming consultative bodies, with localized plans and specialized authorities to improve governance.
- The Supreme Court emphasized that vehicle owners in Delhi-NCR must affix color-coded stickers to petrol and diesel vehicles, including those registered before April 2019. The court suggested linking compliance with PUC certificates, insurance renewals, or ownership transfers and sought suggestions by January 27.

Goa

- Goa's tourism department, in collaboration with Nabard, plans to fund rural homestays under the Gram Vihar scheme, offering up to ₹25 lakh each for 25-30 projects. The initiative promotes sustainable livelihoods, rural tourism, and wellness experiences.
- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari will visit Goa on January 21 to lay the foundation for four highway projects worth ₹2,500 crore and inaugurate a cable-stayed bridge near Goa International Airport. Key projects include the four-lane NH-66 stretch from Margao to Cuncolim.

Gujarat

- The Gujarat government seeks ₹40,783 crore from the Centre to develop semiconductor ecosystems in Dholera SIR and Sanand over six years. Key projects include India's first commercial semiconductor fab by TATA Electronics in Dholera and a chip packaging cluster in Sanand, aiming to position Gujarat as a global semiconductor hub.
- Gujarat plans to establish a Services Commissionerate, similar to the Industries Commissionerate, to enhance employment in the services sector. The initiative aims to raise the sector's GSDP contribution from 32.4% to the national average of 54%.

Haryana

- Haryana's power discoms, UHBVN and DHBVN, face a ₹12,766 crore revenue gap by FY26, mainly due to fuel surcharge actions. The HERC has directed them to submit detailed action plans, following public hearings with stakeholders.
- The Haryana Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (HSKM) plans tractor and motorcycle marches at the block level on January 26, urging PM Modi to address farmers' issues and save fasting leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced the formation of a Special Task Force (STF) to combat drug abuse and organised crime. The STF will be led by senior police officers and include a commando force trained in anti-narcotics and crime, with support from the Narcotics Control Bureau.

Karnataka

- Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will attend a convention for areca nut growers in Sagar, Shivamogga, addressing challenges like the potential ban and compensation. The event aims to resolve key issues, including international imports and research facilities.
- Karnataka will phase out 18 GNM colleges and convert them into BSc nursing colleges, enhancing education and job prospects. This change will affect 651 seats currently available in these colleges.

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Madhya Pradesh

- Amit Shah held discussions with Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav on implementing new criminal laws, emphasizing senior police approval before applying terrorism-related sections. Shah also urged transparency in investigations and a swift 100% rollout of the laws, with monthly reviews of progress.
- Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav has announced name changes for 11 villages in Shajapur district, following similar changes in three villages of his home district, Ujjain.

Mumbai

- Despite being inaugurated with much fanfare, India's longest sea bridge, Atal Setu, has seen lower traffic flow, averaging fewer than 23,000 vehicles daily, below projections of over 56,000. The bridge recorded a total of 83 lakh vehicles in its first year, with a peak of 61,807 vehicles on 14 January 2024.
- The trial run of the Vande Bharat Sleeper rake between Ahmedabad and Mumbai Central tested the 16-coach trainset's performance. Despite a delay of 1.10 hours, the train's swanky interiors were showcased during the trial.

Pune

- The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) has issued interim directions to Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) for violations at its waste dumping site. PCMC has been instructed to submit a time-bound action plan within 15 days and provide a ₹2 lakh bank guarantee for compliance.
- Traffic disruptions on the Pashan-Baner to Shivajinagar route, caused by rerouting for the Baner-Shivajinagar flyover, led to long delays during peak hours. Commuters expressed frustration, highlighting bottlenecks, especially near the SPPU campus.

Punjab

- Farmers' protests on the Punjab-Haryana border hit a setback as SKM and other groups failed to reach a unity plan. SKM demands more time to discuss forming a coordination committee and opposes the NPFAM.
- The Punjab and Haryana High Court has ordered the Union Ministry of Environment to decide on Punjab's request to de-silt the Perch Dam within 45 days to prevent further wildlife damage. The work must conclude before the monsoon to restore the dam's water-carrying capacity.

Rajasthan

- Under the Union government's Swamitva scheme, 1.5 lakh property ownership cards were distributed to beneficiaries in Rajasthan's villages. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma highlighted the completion of drone surveys in 35,955 villages to ensure no villager is left out of the scheme.

Tamil Nadu

- Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu refused AIADMK leader EPS's claims of financial mismanagement, citing Tamil Nadu's fiscal discipline, investments in Tangedco and Chennai Metro, and limited borrowing. He criticized the Centre for withholding funds, adding financial strain.

Telangana

- The Forest Department launched a jungle safari at Kawwal Tiger Reserve near Rallygadpur village, promoting eco-tourism and conservation. The initiative aims to balance wildlife protection with tourism development.

Uttar Pradesh

- A massive fire erupted at a chemical factory in Kanpur's Panki industrial area on Sunday 19 Jan, spreading rapidly due to chemical-filled drums igniting during a transfer operation. Firefighters, including injured personnel, worked to control the blaze, with senior officials on-site investigating the cause.
- The Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj saw a seven-ring security plan with 2,751 CCTV cameras, including 328 AI-enabled ones. Authorities deployed 40,000 personnel, including paramilitary forces, and set up a traffic diversion plan for smooth access. The event expected over 4 crore devotees for the holy dip.

Upcoming News/Events

Madhya Pradesh

- Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav is considering a ban on alcohol in holy cities, following public complaints and recommendations from seers. The state government is exploring changes to its policy, with plans to close liquor stores within religious city boundaries.
- Nearly 62,000 residents of Indore will receive land ownership documents, granting them legal rights to their properties and access to loans and other benefits. The documentation for 61,969 beneficiaries from 213 villages has been completed.

Mumbai

- The new 30 km expressway, connecting Atal Setu to the old Pune Highway, will enhance road connectivity and reduce travel time. Estimated at ₹3,700 crore, it will offer faster access to Navi Mumbai, Goa Highway, and beyond.
- Starting January 20, Navi Mumbai Metro Line No. 1 will run every 10 minutes during peak hours to meet growing demand. The updated schedule aims to improve connectivity between key areas like CBD Belapur and Taloja Industrial.

Pune

- Hinjewadi, Pune, will undergo significant upgrades to tackle traffic congestion, including a four-lane flyover and a six-lane road from Baner to Hinjewadi. The Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) has allocated ₹650 crore for these improvements.
- Maharashtra's education minister announced that Std X and XII board results will be declared by May 15, 2025, a shift from the usual late-May or June timeline. An awareness campaign will be launched to promote a copy-free examination system.

Punjab

- Punjab and Sind Bank plans to raise Rs 2,000 crore via Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) this quarter. This move will reduce the government's stake by 3-4% and improve the bank's capital adequacy ratio by March 2025.
- Ludhiana's industry is eagerly awaiting the opening of Halwara Airport. The CICU proposes to buy 50% of the flight tickets for the first three months. The airport's launch is expected to boost the industry, benefit NRIs, and improve travel efficiency.

Rajasthan

- The Rajasthan government will introduce the Rajasthan Coaching Centre (Control and Regulation) Bill in response to rising student suicides in Kota. The bill will implement measures like mental health counseling, class hour limits, and age restrictions to address the crisis.
- The central government will allocate an additional 5,000 MW solar capacity to Rajasthan under the Kushum A scheme, benefiting farmers with Rs 3.04 per unit. This rate will be higher than the auctioned price for private solar producers.

Tamil Nadu

- BJP's K Annamalai stated that the upcoming Union Budget will introduce more funds and projects for Tamil Nadu while criticizing the state government for neglecting temple amenities and elections. He emphasized the Centre's significant financial support to the state over the last decade.

Telangana

- Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy stated that the Congress government in Telangana will issue ration cards to all eligible candidates, benefiting over 40 lakh people. The government plans to provide 6 kg of fine rice per person for free through ration shops, spending ₹11,000 crore annually.

Uttar Pradesh

- Ghaziabad's first Automated Driving and Training Centre (ADTC) faced a legal challenge before its launch as its operating license was revoked. This followed an advocate's letter citing an Allahabad High Court ruling that only the central government can establish regulations for motor driving training schools, not state governments.
- A UP delegation led by Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh will attend the World Economic Forum in Davos (Jan 20-24) to showcase investment opportunities and meet global leaders, focusing on the state's \$1 trillion economy goal.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- Drone attacks by the Rapid Support Forces have caused widespread blackouts in army-controlled Sudan, impacting millions of internally displaced people. These power disruptions have affected multiple states, further straining infrastructure.
- A petrol tanker explosion in Niger state, Nigeria, on Saturday 18 January, killed at least 70 and injured 56, while destroying more than 15 shops. Locals had rushed to collect spilled fuel before the blast.

America

- Brazil announced Nigeria as a new BRICS partner, highlighting its significant role in the Global South and reforming global governance. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and population, aligns with BRICS members' goals, marking an important step in Brazil's 2025 presidency.
- The death toll in Colombia from recent rebel violence has reached 60, with 32 people kidnapped and hundreds displaced due to clashes between the ELN and a faction of the FARC. The violence has prompted President Gustavo Petro to accuse the ELN of war crimes and suspend peace talks.

China

- U.S. Vice President-elect JD Vance met Chinese Vice President Han Zheng to discuss issues such as fentanyl, trade, and regional stability. The meeting followed a recent call between President-elect Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- The Philippines and China held talks to resolve South China Sea disputes, focusing on cooperation despite tensions. Both sides emphasized dialogue and peaceful issue resolution while addressing concerns over recent standoffs.

Europe

- Russia and Iran signed a 20-year strategic partnership agreement to deepen military cooperation, including joint training, security services, and warship port visits. Both nations committed not to allow their territories to be used against each other and pledged mutual defense against external threats.
- Romania's government has set new dates for a presidential election re-run on May 4 and 18, tightening rules for social media platforms like TikTok to prevent election interference. This follows concerns about manipulation during the initial vote, particularly involving a pro-Russian candidate.

Middle East

- Palestinians celebrated a ceasefire agreement in Gaza, returning to bombed areas while three female hostages freed by Hamas were reunited with their families in Israel. Amidst the devastation, displaced individuals, like Aya from Gaza City, expressed relief after long-term displacement.

Pakistan

- Pakistan launched its first domestically made observation satellite, PRSC-EO1, from China's Jiuquan Centre. The satellite's goal is to improve disaster management, urban planning, and agricultural development.
- Pakistan will reduce power tariffs for electric vehicle charging stations by 45% to encourage demand, which is part of broader energy sector reforms. The government also plans financing options for e-bikes and converting petrol-powered vehicles to electric ones.

United Kingdom

- The UK's financial regulator warned that efforts to boost economic growth may increase risks, resulting in potential harm to consumers and businesses. It proposed easing mortgage access and reducing regulations while acknowledging the risks involved in supporting the government's growth strategy.

United States

- The Philippines and the United States conducted their fifth joint maritime exercise in the South China Sea, marking their first for 2025. This move, strengthening ties under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., could provoke China, as it coincides with increased U.S. access to Philippine military bases, including those near Taiwan.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- Libya requires \$3-4 billion to boost oil production to 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd) and aims to further increase it to 2 million bpd. The country's oil sector accounts for over 95% of its economy, and a new license bidding round is expected by January's end.
- Botswana's economy, after a 3.3% contraction in 2024, is expected to grow by 3-4% in 2025, driven by a global recovery in diamond markets and growth in non-mining sectors. The country heavily relies on diamond exports, which have limited government spending.

America

- Canada is prepared to respond to potential U.S. tariffs, with Foreign Minister Melanie Joly confirming readiness for multiple rounds of countermeasures. Canada may target specific goods, including Florida orange juice, if U.S. President-elect Trump proceeds with his tariff plan.
- The Biden administration plans to remove Cuba from the U.S. terrorism blacklist, while Cuba will release over 500 prisoners. These actions aim to reset U.S.-Cuba relations ahead of Trump's presidency, signaling a rollback of Trump-era sanctions.

China

- China's 2024-2025 education plan aims to strengthen its education system by expanding free education, improving primary and secondary school access, and optimizing school layouts. It also seeks to increase high-quality undergraduate enrollment, expand graduate education, and raise the proportion of doctoral students.
- The Philippines emphasized that ASEAN and China must address key issues, like scope and legal binding, for a comprehensive South China Sea code of conduct. Despite progress, discussions have stalled, and Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo urged for resolution of tougher topics in upcoming talks.

Europe

- Russia strongly opposes any UK-Ukraine cooperation in the Sea of Azov, claiming it as its internal territory. Moscow warned it would resist any British military presence there, dismissing the recent UK-Ukraine partnership agreement as a "PR campaign."

Middle East

- Iran unveiled a secret underground naval missile base during war games, heightening tensions with the U.S. and Israel. The base is designed for long-range missile operations, and Iranian officials emphasized the country's naval capabilities.
- French President Macron urged Israel to accelerate troop withdrawal from southern Lebanon, in line with a ceasefire deadline. He also called for Lebanon's military to have sole control over weapons and supported strengthening its presence in the south.

Pakistan

- The IMF has revised Pakistan's 2025 GDP growth forecast down to 3% from 3.2%, reflecting economic challenges. Both the IMF and ADB maintain a cautious outlook with a forecasted 4% growth for 2026.

United Kingdom

- The IMF has raised the UK's 2025 growth forecast to 1.6%, while the Bank of England predicts 1.5%. The UK is expected to have the third-strongest G7 growth in 2025, supported by public investment and household income growth.
- Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey urged global financial powers, especially the U.S. and China, to avoid economic nationalism. He warned that unilateral actions like trade tariffs could harm all nations, emphasizing the importance of global cooperation despite differing philosophies between major economies.

United States

- U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has expressed interest in visiting China after assuming office, according to sources cited by the Wall Street Journal. The visit is seen as part of his diplomatic plans.
- President Biden will sign an executive order prioritizing support for economically distressed U.S. communities before leaving office. The order aims to help these regions by building on investments in infrastructure, job training, and energy programs made during his presidency.

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