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INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Andhra Pradesh

- Andhra Pradesh launched 10 mobile ICTC units to provide HIV counselling, testing, and treatment in remote areas, with costs covered by the Union government. Eligible patients receive free ART medication and a ₹4,000 monthly pension after eight months of treatment.
- At WEF in Davos, Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu met Bill Gates to discuss partnerships in healthcare, education, and AI innovation. Naidu has proposed a health innovation center.

Delhi

- The Delhi Chief Electoral Office launched the "vote from home" initiative for senior citizens (85+) and people with disabilities ahead of the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections. Home voting started on January 23, 2025, in three constituencies, with 6,399 seniors and 1,050 disabled voters opting for this facility.
- Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 8.6°C on January 25, 2025, slightly above the season's average. The air quality improved to a "moderate" level, with an AQI of 187, while the maximum temperature is expected to reach around 23°C.

Goa

- Goa's tourism department suspended all paragliding activities statewide after a fatal incident involving a woman and a paragliding operator. A review of safety standards and operator compliance will be conducted, with penalties for non-compliance.
- Niti Aayog ranked Goa third in its Fiscal Health Index, praising the state's revenue mobilization and balanced expenditure. However, it advised the government to create a debt sustainability framework for long-term fiscal health.

Gujarat

- The Gujarat CM inaugurated and laid the foundation for Rs 352 crore worth of projects in Surat, focusing on sustainable urban mobility and development. An MoU with GIZ was signed to use renewable energy for electric city buses.
- Gujarat attracted \$57.65 billion in FDI between April 2014 and September 2024, accounting for 86% of the state's total FDI. The state's FDI inflow grew by 72.5% in FY 2024-25, surpassing India's national growth rate of 45.4%.

Haryana

- Haryana's capital issue is resurfacing due to Chandigarh's contested status, shared with Punjab. The recent administrative change has deepened the identity gap, highlighting Haryana's need for a distinct capital.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh cabinet extended a 2023 disaster relief package to families affected by the Tandri village fire, offering up to ₹7 lakh for damages and ₹5,000 monthly rent until June 30. It also approved a ropeway project between Kullu bus stand and Peej paragliding point to boost tourism.
- Himachal CM Sukhu reviewed Kangra's development projects, urging officials to speed up flagship initiatives. He emphasized making 2025 a "Performing Year" and investing ₹1,500 crore in modern healthcare.

Karnataka

- Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan met with minority leaders in Virajpet and allocated Rs 3.5 crore for basic facilities. He promised an additional Rs 4 crore for minority development and 1,000 more houses under the BR Ambedkar and Basava Housing Schemes.
- The Karnataka government reversed plans to issue TDR certificates to the Wadiyar family due to a Rs 3,016 crore compensation. An ordinance was proposed to address legal challenges and delay the acquisition decision.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu urged Google to set up a chip design and manufacturing unit in Visakhapatnam, citing its potential as a tech hub. He discussed collaboration opportunities with Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kurian at WEF in Davos.
- AP CM Chandrababu Naidu met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to thank her for the Vizag Steel Plant package and discuss development projects. He also highlighted funding needs for Amaravati from the World Bank and ADB.

Delhi

- The Delhi Jal Board has acquired land near Vasant Kunj for a new sewage treatment plant to address local water contamination, with a completion deadline of March 31, 2025. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee also reported that the DDA will issue a fresh tender to regularly clean the affected water body.
- For the upcoming February 5 elections, the Election Commission is setting up 56 model polling booths in New Delhi, showcasing India's cultural heritage and modern achievements. One theme, "Game on for Democracy," will feature sports imagery and honor Indian athletes and icons.

Goa

- Goa's tourism department is planning to organize Shigmotsav, Carnival, and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti with great enthusiasm. The Carnival will run from Feb 28 to Mar 4, with events in multiple cities, and a budget of Rs 59 lakh has been allocated.
- The Goa PWD has announced a traffic diversion on NH748 from Jan 24 to Mar 23, 2025, for the construction of a service road and box culvert near Atal Setu. Traffic towards Ponda will be diverted onto a service road, with proper signboards and safety measures in place.

Gujarat

- Gujarat plans to replicate Haryana and Odisha's sports models to boost its bid for the 2036 Olympics. The focus is on developing athletes through sports nurseries, academies, and high-performance centers.
- Pankaj Joshi, a 1989-batch IAS officer, will become Gujarat's next chief secretary, succeeding Raj Kumar after his superannuation on January 31. Joshi, known for his integrity and efficient work, brings vast experience from his roles in finance, energy, and other government sectors.

Haryana

- Haryana's Chief Minister Nayab Saini highlighted the state's push to become a start-up hub after PM Modi praised Ambala and Hisar for their growing start-up culture in his "Mann Ki Baat" program. The government plans new initiatives in the budget to support this growth.

Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced a ₹150-crore international convention centre in Dharamshala to boost tourism and employment. He also revealed infrastructure projects and emphasized the government's commitment to transparency and anti-corruption measures.

Karnataka

- KBJNL has approved Rs 359.6 crore for pending works in the Mallabadi lift irrigation project, covering Phases 1, 2, and 3. This move, endorsed by CM Siddaramaiah, will speed up water delivery for agriculture.
- Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot pledged support for Karnataka's goal of becoming a global sports hub at the Karnataka State Games-2025. He emphasized the need for regular regional-level training to support athletes' development and medal prospects.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- Rwandan-backed M23 rebels advanced on Goma in eastern Congo, forcing thousands to flee and disrupting flights. The U.N. Security Council is set to meet after the death of 10 peacekeepers amidst rising tensions in the region.
- Africa CDC expresses concerns over the U.S. withdrawal from the WHO, fearing a significant impact on health initiatives across the continent. The U.S. has been a major funder, and its exit may challenge disease response efforts.

America

- Colombia's Army reported that 104 fighters, including 20 minors, deserted from a faction of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) amid an offensive by the National Liberation Army (ELN) in the northeast.
- Argentina's economy grew by 0.1% year-on-year in November, defying expectations of a 0.6% contraction. This marks the first growth since May 2024, driven by the fishing and financial sectors, despite declines in construction and commodities.

China

- The Philippines suspends a South China Sea survey after its fisheries vessels faced "harassment" from China's coast guard and navy. The move follows aggressive actions during the scientific research mission.
- China guides state insurers and commercial funds to boost investments in A-shares to strengthen its stock market. The plan increases investment size and improves long-term performance evaluations for insurers.

Europe

- Italy resumes transferring migrants to detention centers in Albania, sending 49 individuals picked up in international waters. The government pushes forward with its policy despite legal challenges.
- Storm Eowyn causes record-breaking winds, killing one man in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Nearly one-third of homes lose power, flights are canceled, and public transport halts due to the severe weather.

Middle East

- Italy and Saudi Arabia have signed \$10 billion in cooperation and industrial agreements, marking a new phase in their strategic partnership. The agreements cover infrastructure, energy, defense, sports, entertainment, and tourism, with a focus on deepening bilateral ties.

Pakistan

- Pakistan has secured a \$1 billion loan from two Middle Eastern banks at a 6%-7% interest rate. The short-term loans aim to support Pakistan's financing needs, with plans to raise up to \$4 billion by the next fiscal year.
- A large protest march organized by the Awami Tehreek in Sindh opposed corporate farming and the construction of new canals. Protesters demanded land allocation for local farmers and better agricultural support, with speeches urging the government to halt land seizures.

United Kingdom

- British minister Sarah Jones received positive feedback from CEOs at Davos on the UK government's growth message. She emphasized the need for clear regulations and tax policies to attract investment amid economic stagnation.

United States

- President Trump reinstates the Mexico City Policy, cutting U.S. funds for foreign organizations promoting or performing abortions. He also rejoins the international anti-abortion Geneva Consensus Declaration.
- President Trump capped his first week back in office with a Las Vegas visit to discuss cutting taxes on tips, a 2024 campaign promise. He emphasized economic optimism, stating that America's decline was over and echoed previous campaign themes.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- WHO urges an end to attacks on healthcare workers and facilities in Sudan after a drone strike on a hospital in North Darfur killed over 70. The conflict between Sudan's army and RSF has caused massive casualties and displacement.
- Gabon's Council of Ministers confirms presidential elections will take place on April 12, 2025, ending military rule that began with the August 2023 coup. The elections follow a referendum in November on a new constitution.

America

- Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is seeking an explanation from the U.S. government over the mistreatment of Brazilian deportees, who arrived in Brazil in handcuffs. The incident, involving 88 passengers and 16 U.S. agents, led to an unscheduled stop in Manaus due to technical issues.
- Brazil's government is expected to approve the merger of top airlines Gol and Azul, prioritizing a financially healthy sector over competition concerns. The merger, formalized last week, would give the new company dominance in Brazil's domestic market.

China

- China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit the UK in mid-February for talks with UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy. This marks the first Britain-China strategic dialogue since 2018. The visit comes after a recent trip by British finance minister Rachel Reeves to China.
- Thailand and China will collaborate to tackle illegal scam call centres along the Thai border with Myanmar and Cambodia. They will set up a coordination centre in Bangkok to investigate and combat these operations, which exploit trafficked workers.

Europe

- The EU targets AI, biotech, and green tech to boost global competitiveness, aiming to cut red tape and enhance productivity. This initiative, under pressure from France and the US, focuses on reducing company reporting requirements by 25%.
- Denmark agrees to discuss the Arctic with the U.S. after a constructive call between Foreign Minister Rasmussen and Secretary of State Rubio.

Middle East

- The EU is considering suspending sanctions on Syria related to energy and transport to aid economic stabilization and reconstruction. Discussions on easing financial transaction restrictions are ongoing, with a decision expected during meeting in Brussels.

Pakistan

- Pakistan's central bank is expected to cut its interest rate by 1 percentage point, marking its sixth consecutive reduction. This move aims to boost economic sentiment as inflation slows and the exchange rate stabilizes.
- Pakistan has agreed to a ten-year plan with the World Bank, securing \$20 billion in loans to stabilize its economy. The country faces significant challenges, including political instability and the aftermath of catastrophic flooding in 2022.

United Kingdom

- British finance minister Rachel Reeves plans to announce the release of £60 billion in pension surpluses to boost economic growth. This move aims to support Prime Minister Keir Starmer's infrastructure and living standards initiatives.

United States

- U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica next week. The trip, marking his first as Secretary, underscores the importance of U.S. foreign policy in addressing immigration and regional concerns.
- The U.S. military will deploy 1,500 additional troops to the Mexico border, including 500 Marines, Army helicopter crews, and intelligence analysts. This move follows President Trump's executive order on immigration, and further discussions may lead to a deployment of up to 10,000 troops.

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INDIA UPDATE

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Madhya Pradesh

- Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav announced a liquor ban in 17 religious towns, including Ujjain, as a step towards eradicating alcohol consumption in the state. He emphasized the ban's aim to promote good governance and a better life for families under PM Modi's leadership.

Mumbai

- An explosion at an ordnance factory in Maharashtra's Bhandara district killed 8 and injured 7 on Friday morning (24th Jan). The blast caused the factory roof to collapse, with rescue teams deployed to clear debris and assist the injured.
- On Republic Day, 43 Maharashtra police officials are honored with President's Medals for their exceptional service. Four officers receive the Distinguished Service Medal, while 39 are awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

Pune

- Maharashtra doubles medical coverage for Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) patients to ₹1.60 lakh under MJPJAY and PM-JAY schemes. Pune reports 82 suspected GBS cases, with many requiring ventilator support.
- Pune Metro extends daily operations till 11pm from Sunday 26 January, aiding key stations like Swargate, Shivajinagar, and PCMC. Trains will run every 15 minutes during extended hours, with potential midnight extension based on feedback.

Punjab

- Punjab farmers held peaceful tractor marches on Republic Day, demanding MSP guarantees, debt waivers, and the scrapping of NPFAM. Protests targeted corporate outlets, with further talks scheduled on February 12.
- Punjab has the lowest Fiscal Health Index (FHI) score for 2022-23 at 10.7, trailing behind Odisha, Haryana, and Rajasthan. The report highlights Punjab's fiscal challenges, placing it alongside Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and West Bengal.

Rajasthan

- Rajasthan ranks second nationally for issuing ABHA IDs to six crore residents, digitising their health records. This initiative facilitates easy access and management of medical documentation across healthcare providers with patient consent.
- Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma approved agricultural input subsidies for farmers in 21 districts affected by floods and hailstorms. A survey will assess Kharif crop damage, with subsidies granted as per SDRF norms for affected areas.

Tamil Nadu

- Coimbatore's regional passport office has launched Tamil Nadu's first mobile passport seva van to serve remote areas. Equipped with modern facilities, it will visit districts like Coimbatore, Tirupur, and Erode, processing passport applications based on demand.
- Governor R N Ravi criticized funding shortages, teacher vacancies, and government interference for declining educational quality in Tamil Nadu. He accused the state of eroding university autonomy, leading to unemployment and poor education standards.

Telangana

- Telangana secured a ₹45,500 crore investment from Sun Petrochemicals at WEF 2024, aimed at developing hydro and solar power projects. This deal will enhance green energy capacity and create over 7,000 jobs, boosting the state's socio-economic growth.
- Hospitals in Telangana resumed services under the Aarogyasri scheme after the government agreed to clear pending dues and ensure regular payments. A special committee has been formed to revise the scheme's MoU and compensation packages.

Uttar Pradesh

- The UP government enforced stricter guidelines under the Gangsters Act, barring gang members from government jobs or schemes. Police must complete investigations in six months and trace their assets and fund sources.
- Uttar Pradesh Police led the Republic Day medals tally with 111 out of 797 awards for gallantry, distinguished service, and meritorious service. Notable winners include STF personnel involved in top gangster operations and ADG Ramit Sharma with four others receiving the President's Medal.

Upcoming News/Events

Madhya Pradesh

- The Madhya Pradesh government is reviewing the Ladli Behna Yojna to identify ineligible beneficiaries and ease the financial burden. The scheme, offering cash allowances to women based on age, income, and landholding, recently increased the amount to ₹3,000 per month.

Mumbai

- From February 1, Mumbai's auto and taxi fares will rise, with the minimum auto fare increasing to ₹26 and taxi fare to ₹31. The hike, approved by MMRTA, accounts for higher fuel, maintenance, and operational costs.
- Mumbai's civic budget won't introduce new taxes, but an 8% water bill hike is expected. Rising capital expenditure, with ₹31,775 crore allocated, supports major projects like the Coastal Road.

Pune

- NGT directs authorities to submit a response by February 21 regarding concerns raised over the Riverfront Development (RFD) Project's environmental clearance. Activist Sarang Yadvadkar filed an application questioning the compliance with environmental laws.
- Pune authorities will investigate rising GBS cases in areas like Nanded City and Dhayari, focusing on contaminated water sources. Private tankers will be monitored and licensed to ensure safe drinking water.

Punjab

- Punjab's storage issues may ease as the Union ministry launches an Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), offering subsidised rice at ₹2,250 per quintal. The scheme aims to support state programmes, food security, and ethanol production.
- The Centre will meet protesting Punjab farmers on February 14 in Chandigarh to address their demands. Officials urged fasting leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, on his 54th day of hunger strike, to take medical aid for his participation.

Rajasthan

- The Rajasthan State Transport Corporation has proposed bus fare hikes to offset rising operational costs, including increased diesel prices and employee salaries. The fare revisions, pending approval since 2016, range from 30 paise to 65 paise across various bus categories.
- The Rajasthan Forest Department plans to revise Nahargarh Wildlife Sanctuary's boundaries to resolve legal issues and align with the 2019 ESZ notification. Environmental groups oppose the move, citing concerns about potential benefits for local influencers.

Tamil Nadu

- Madurai city has received approval for two modern waste transfer stations at Kochadai and Thathaneri, with a budget of ₹18 crore. These stations will streamline waste transport, reduce fuel use, and ease traffic, processing up to 200 tonnes daily.
- Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation expects summer demand to exceed 22,000 MW, securing 2,000 MW from Feb 15 for the season. Additional power of 1,000 MW is anticipated from March to May.

Telangana

- UBS is expanding its global capability center in Hyderabad, adding 1,800 new jobs over two years. The move leverages the city's talent pool and infrastructure, driven by supportive government policies.
- Telangana has requested an additional ₹10,000 crore in borrowing capacity for FY 2024-25, citing strong debt repayment history. The state seeks to meet financial needs and support ongoing welfare schemes, while maintaining fiscal discipline.

Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh is set to become the country's only state with a 1,047 km Expressway upon completion of the Ganga Expressway, spanning from Meerut to Prayagraj. Minister Brijesh Singh highlighted the state's focus on industrial growth and job creation under CM Yogi Adityanath's leadership.
- The Greater Noida Authority is launching a project to beautify key city entry and exit points with decorative lighting, costing over Rs 10 crore. The work will cover five major gateways, enhancing their visual appeal with architectural lighting solutions.