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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

- Real estate activity in the Vijayawada-Guntur region has surged as the Andhra Pradesh government resumes Amaravati's development. Builders expect land values to rise after Chandrababu Naidu revived abandoned projects and invited new tenders.
- Andhra CM Chandrababu Naidu stated that rescuing chilli farmers from falling prices is the government's top priority. He urged exporters and traders to cooperate and has written to the Centre thrice on this issue.

Delhi

- The Delhi government is doubling health insurance coverage to ₹10 lakh by integrating Ayushman Bharat with a state-funded top-up. An MoU with the National Health Authority is in progress, and implementation modalities are being finalized.
- The Supreme Court stayed NCLAT's order, handing 16 Supertech projects to NBCC and seeking alternative proposals for 42,000 homebuyers. Stakeholders must submit plans by March 21, with a hearing set for April.

Goa

- Goa's Electricity Department is upgraded from B+ to A in power distribution rankings. Meanwhile, Comorodd-Margao residents face severe water shortages, relying on late-night collection due to low pressure.
- Goans lose ₹100 crore annually to overseas job scams, with CM admitting rising fraud cases. Experts urge both government crackdowns and public awareness, as many knowingly engage with fraudulent agents despite risks.

Gujarat

- Gujarat has revised construction rules near the Asiatic lion habitat, raising concerns among conservationists. Experts warn the changes could harm the Gir Protected Area and its wildlife. Environmentalists are urging stricter safeguards to protect the region.
- AMC sealed 7,849 properties in Ahmedabad to recover pending property tax. The West Zone saw the highest action, sealing 5,654 properties and collecting ₹2.66 crore. Other major zones included South-West and North-West, recovering ₹96.18 lakh and ₹1.49 crore, respectively.

Haryana

- Over 7,000 appeal cases are pending at the Haryana State Information Commission, with ₹2.84 crore in unrecovered penalties. Since 2005, ₹5.86 crore penalties were imposed for delayed responses, but only half has been recovered. At the current pace, clearing the backlog may take 7-8 years.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh government has amended its Prison Manual 2021 to eliminate caste-based work allocation. Jail records will no longer mention caste, and prisoners will not be assigned duties based on caste.
- The Supreme Court has given the Himachal Pradesh government four weeks to respond to allegations of animal sacrifice. The petition, filed by the Animal Welfare Board cites violations of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

Karnataka

- Karnataka's pro-Kannada activists allegedly attacked an MSRTC driver in Chitradurga, prompting Maharashtra to suspend bus services from Kolhapur indefinitely. Karnataka authorities arrested four people in Belagavi for assaulting a bus conductor over language use, as tensions escalate.
- Traffic congestion on Bengaluru's Outer Ring Road near Sarjapur Road is expected to continue for 45 more days due to ongoing Metro work. Commuters are urged to plan routes accordingly or consider work-from-home options.

Upcoming News/Events

Andhra Pradesh

- PM Narendra Modi affirmed that the NDA will contest all upcoming elections as a united bloc, emphasizing coalition strength. He addressed NDA CMs and deputy CMs, stressing unity in upcoming state polls.
- Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary K Vijayanand directed officials to ensure reliable power for farmers and uninterrupted supply during summer. He urged expediting 40,000 new agricultural connections and boosting GENCO's power generation.

Delhi

- Delhi CM Rekha Gupta directed officials to draft guidelines for the ₹2,500 monthly Mahila Samridhi Yojana. She met PM Modi to discuss governance priorities. Later, she reviewed budget preparations at the Secretariat.
- NDMC plans to launch a smart integrated parking system by June 2025, covering 1,541 sites with IT-enabled sensors. The selected agency will implement and manage it for 10 years. Parking charges may be revised post-implementation.

Goa

- Goa plans two Business Facilitation Centres (BFCs) in Panaji and Margao and a Women Entrepreneurship Centre (WEFC) under the RAMP program. Launching by April, they aim to boost MSMEs' market access, credit, and governance.
- Hindon Airport expects a 5-6x rise in passengers as flights to Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Goa start on March 1-2. Expansion plans include new routes to Ayodhya, Lucknow, Prayagraj, and Varanasi, with infrastructure upgrades underway.

Gujarat

- PM Modi will launch the ₹2,927 crore Project Lion in Gir on March 3, marking World Wildlife Day. Gujarat is the last abode of Asiatic lions, and the project aims at their long-term conservation. He will also chair a National Board for Wildlife meeting during his visit.
- Gujarat has 56 vacant IAS posts out of 313 sanctioned, with 30 new officers expected by October 2025. Currently, 14 IAS officers hold additional charges across departments. The government blames past Congress inaction for the shortage.

Haryana

- Haryana's health department will inspect 1,513 MTP and 2,037 ultrasound centers to curb illegal practices. ACS Sudhir Rajpal warned of strict action, including license cancellations for violations. The move aims to maintain a balanced gender ratio.

Himachal Pradesh

- The Himachal Pradesh government will seek special relief from the Centre to provide land for Bhakra displaced persons and landless individuals, as Bilaspur district faces land constraints due to forest areas. The proposal received unanimous support across party lines.
- The Himachal Pradesh government will sign an MoU with UNESCO to enhance quality, equitable, and inclusive education. Education Minister Rohit Thakur emphasized ongoing reforms, citing improvements in the state's literacy rate and recent national reports.

Karnataka

- Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara clarified that there is no proposal to allow early leave for Muslim government employees during Ramzan. This comes after Karnataka Congress leaders urged CM Siddaramaiah to follow Telangana and Andhra Pradesh's policy.
- Karnataka Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa confirmed that the hijab ban in educational institutions will remain until the Supreme Court issues a ruling. He stated that the existing dress code will continue ahead of the SSLC examinations.

INDIA UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Madhya Pradesh

- Madhya Pradesh plays a key role in India's automotive sector, with the Pithampur Auto Cluster spanning 4,500 hectares and employing over 25,000 people. It hosts NATRAX, Asia's longest high-speed testing track, and houses 30+ OEMs, including Mahindra & Mahindra, Eicher Motors, and John Deere.

Mumbai

- BMC has started repairing uneven patches on the Coastal Road near Haji Ali after criticism over a viral video. Traffic will be partially blocked until Sunday as the mastic overlay is removed and a new asphalt layer is applied.
- The Mumbai lane of the Uran Phata bridge on the Sion-Panvel Highway is closed for a month from February 22 to March 22 for cement concreting work. Turbhe traffic police have announced diversions via Atal Setu and Palm Beach Road to ease congestion.
- Mumbai Metro 3 sees low ridership, with only 46 passengers per service on average. Despite a projected 400,000 daily commuters, the Aarey-BKC corridor has recorded just 20,000 passengers per day over 136 days.

Pune

- PMRDA conducted an anti-encroachment drive on Ahmednagar Road in Koregaon Bhima as per Commissioner Yogesh Mhase's instructions. The action followed a survey of the targeted areas.
- GBS suspected cases in Pune district have risen to 214, with 11 deaths, including 4 confirmed due to the infection. PCMC will reopen 58 sealed RO plants after ensuring compliance with municipal guidelines.

Punjab

- Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann asserts the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal will never be built, citing Punjab's lack of surplus water. He demands a reassessment of water availability, while Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini accuses Punjab of stalling the project.
- Punjab government has launched a career guidance initiative for Class 12 students, distributing a Google Form to gather their plans. School heads have been directed to ensure all students fill out the form.

Rajasthan

- The Rajasthan State Wildlife Board has granted in-principle approval to divert 23.3 hectares of Mount Abu Sanctuary for the Salgaon Dam project. The proposal now awaits final approval from the National Wildlife Board.
- A global dialogue in Jaipur emphasized AI-driven healthcare solutions to tackle emerging diseases and epidemics. Experts stressed the need for interdisciplinary research, digital health, and global collaborations.

Tamil Nadu

- Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin rejects the National Education Policy (NEP), stating he won't implement it even for ₹10,000 crore from the Centre. He calls NEP "regressive" and alleges it imposes Hindi while denying SC/ST and BC students financial aid.

Telangana

- The SLBC tunnel collapsed on Feb 22, 2025, trapping eight workers after water seepage caused a structural failure. NDRF, SDRF, and the Army are leading rescue efforts but face heavy waterlogging and mud challenges. The Army's Engineer Task Force has been deployed with medical teams and high-capacity pumps.
- Telangana Education Commission (TEC) submitted its report to CM A. Revanth Reddy, highlighting key challenges from pre-primary to university level. The TEC, formed in September 2024, toured districts and consulted stakeholders to propose education sector reforms.

Uttar Pradesh

- Many centrally-sponsored schemes in Uttar Pradesh face fund shortages due to delays caused by the new SNA-Sparsh system. Funds are now routed through the RBI instead of state treasuries, slowing disbursement. The Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) is among the worst affected.
- Uttar Pradesh allocates ₹40,869 crore for law and order in 2025-26, with ₹339 crore for police welfare, new vehicles, and forensic tech. The state blocked 13.83 lakh cybercrime-linked numbers and secured 41,000 convictions in crimes against women since 2017.

Upcoming News/Events

Madhya Pradesh

- Madhya Pradesh's new aviation policy includes an airport every 150 km and a helipad every 45 km, with grants of ₹7.5 lakh for new domestic flights and ₹10 lakh for international routes. The state will also launch helicopter services linking Indore, Ujjain, and Omkareshwar.

Mumbai

- Panvel will receive an additional 50 MLD water from June under the Jal Jeevan Mission, as assured by MJP officials. A new pipeline under Phase 3 of the Nhava Sheva project is being laid to replace old, rusted pipes and improve supply.
- The Borivali subway culvert project is set to proceed as WR and BMC resolve their payment dispute. WR, which received only ₹2 crore out of ₹28.29 crore due, agreed to allow water flow, while BMC committed to clearing pending payments.
- Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) is launching a free four-wheeler driving training program for women under its pink budget initiative. PMC has allocated ₹25 lakh for the scheme and is inviting tenders from registered training institutes.

Pune

- Ajit Pawar has directed PMRDA to complete the ₹909-crore Lion and Tiger Point project, including Maharashtra's longest glass skywalk in Lonavala, by June 2027. The 125m-long skywalk has all major approvals, with ₹5.25 crore transferred for land acquisition.
- PCMC has proposed no hike in property tax for 2025-26, presenting a ₹9,675.27 crore budget focused on roads, water supply, CCTV in schools, and Indrayani river rejuvenation. A ₹900 crore allocation is set for 48.94 km of DP roads, prioritizing Wakad, Ravet, and Chakan.

Punjab

- Punjab will receive 347 e-buses under the PM-eBus Sewa Scheme, with Ludhiana and Amritsar getting 100 each, Jalandhar 97, and Patiala 50. The Centre has sanctioned ₹45.11 crore for supporting infrastructure.
- Punjab is set to exceed its projected debt for 2024-25, having already borrowed ₹30,162.40 crore (99% of the estimate) by January. With plans to raise ₹9,847 crore more, the state's outstanding debt may surpass ₹3.74 lakh crore.

Rajasthan

- Rajasthan's 2025-26 Budget prioritizes infrastructure, job creation, and water projects despite a ₹84,643 crore fiscal deficit. Key announcements include 2.75 lakh job recruitments, 20 lakh drinking water connections, and ₹60,000 crore for nine expressways.

Tamil Nadu

- The ₹314 crore flyover connecting Pallipalayam and Alampalayam remains unused despite completion in December 2024. Residents of Namakkal and Erode urge the Tamil Nadu government to open it, citing severe traffic congestion at the Pallipalayam junction.
- Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin warns of a possible reduction in Lok Sabha seats due to successful family planning, citing delimitation concerns. The state, with 39 seats, opposes any cut, especially before the 2026 assembly elections.

Telangana

- TGSRTC deploys 3,000 special buses for Maha Shivaratri travel. Major routes include 800 buses to Srisailem, 714 to Vemulawada, and 444 to Edupayala. Additional services cover Keesaragutta, Vela, and Kaleshwaram.
- GHMC is intensifying property tax collection as the financial year-end approaches to bridge the revenue gap. The Revenue wing is taking strict action against defaulters to meet targets. Property tax remains GHMC's primary revenue source.

Uttar Pradesh

- CM Yogi Adityanath asserts Uttar Pradesh will become a trillion-dollar economy by 2029, countering opposition doubts. He highlights a roadmap drawn in 2022 and UP's rise from a BIMARU state to India's second-largest economy.
- Uttar Pradesh's ₹8.09 lakh crore Budget 2025-26 focuses on 10 key sectors, targeting a \$1 trillion economy. Major allocations include 22% for development, 13% for education, and 11% for agriculture. Key announcements include free scooty, gas cylinders, and AI investments.

GLOBAL UPDATE

Highlights of this week

Africa

- Sudan's Rapid Support Forces signed a charter with allied groups to form a "government of peace and unity," despite opposition from the Sudanese army. The move signals further fragmentation in the two-year civil war, with concerns over international recognition.
- G20 foreign ministers met in South Africa amid tensions over Ukraine, trade, and U.S. absence due to diplomatic disputes. President Ramaphosa urged rich nations to address climate and debt concerns, highlighting worsening global inequality.

America

- Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum announced a constitutional reform to protect national sovereignty after the U.S. designated cartels as terrorist organizations. She also proposed stricter penalties for arms trafficking, a key issue as most illegal guns in Mexico come from the U.S.
- Canadian PM Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Donald Trump discussed the Ukraine war and fentanyl trade in a call on Saturday, Feb 22. Both leaders expressed a desire to end the conflict and will join a G7 call on Monday with NATO and EU leaders.

China

- China's defense ministry dismisses Australian complaints over live-fire naval drills, calling them "hyped up" and "inconsistent with the facts." Australia claims the drills forced flight diversions, while China insists proper safety notices were issued.

Europe

- Russian FM Sergei Lavrov met Chinese FM Wang Yi at the G20 in South Africa, discussing U.S. ties and Ukraine. Both praised their strategic partnership amid global instability. Lavrov and Wang are set to meet again in Moscow soon.
- Putin appoints Kirill Dmitriev as special envoy for economic cooperation. Dmitriev, a U.S.-savvy banker, will focus on ties with the U.S. and Global South. His role formalizes his position in Russia-U.S. negotiations.

Middle East

- Syria's new President Ahmed al-Sharaa met China's ambassador in Damascus, marking the first public engagement since Bashar al-Assad's overthrow. China, which backed Assad, faces uncertainty as Syria's new Islamist rulers integrate foreign fighters, including Uyghurs, into their forces.
- Qatar has signed a five-year deal with Scale AI to enhance government services using AI-powered tools. The agreement includes over 50 AI applications, focusing on predictive analytics, automation, and data analysis.

Pakistan

- BLA militants killed seven passengers on a Lahore-bound bus in Balochistan after verifying their IDs. The group claimed the victims were military intelligence personnel. The attack reflects escalating insurgent violence in the region.

United Kingdom

- UK's January budget surplus is £15.4 billion, below the £20.5 billion forecast, as tax revenues fall short. Year-to-date borrowing hits £118.2 billion, raising concerns over Rachel Reeves meeting debt targets ahead of the March 26 fiscal update.
- Peter Wilson, a Mandarin-speaking diplomat and son of former Hong Kong Governor David Wilson, is set to become the UK's next ambassador to China. His appointment signals Labour's push to rebuild ties with Beijing after years of strained relations under Conservative governments.

United States

- U.S. President Donald Trump signed a memorandum directing CFIUS to restrict Chinese investments in strategic sectors, citing national security risks. The move, which could expand outbound investment restrictions, is expected to heighten U.S.-China economic tensions.
- The U.S. Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) is firing 76 probationary employees as part of broader federal job cuts under the Trump administration. Similar layoffs have occurred at the FDIC and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Upcoming News/Events

Africa

- Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi will form a unity government amid criticism over military losses to Rwanda-backed M23 rebels. Opposition leaders accuse him of prioritizing power over national security as conflicts escalate in North and South Kivu.
- Tunisian President Kais Saied called for amending the central bank law, raising concerns over its independence. The bank has kept rates at 8% despite Saied's push for cuts, while Tunisia increasingly relies on domestic funding amid Western financial difficulties.

America

- Panama's President Jose Raul Mulino instructed the foreign minister to reject claims of Chinese influence over the Panama Canal ahead of a meeting with U.S. Southern Command chief Admiral Alvin Holsey. The U.S. under Trump has raised concerns over China's role in the strategic waterway.
- Guyana expects to soon sign an oil production-sharing agreement with a TotalEnergies-led consortium for offshore exploration, Energy Minister Vickram Bharrat said. The country, producing 940,000 bpd this year, also plans to sign at least three more exploration contracts and reoffer the Corentyne block.

China

- China's Vice Premier He Lifeng will hold a video call with U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to discuss key economic issues. China's foreign ministry announced the meeting on Friday, 21 Feb.

Europe

- Russia may agree to use \$300 billion in frozen assets for Ukraine's reconstruction but wants part allocated to occupied regions. U.S.-Russia talks in Saudi Arabia marked initial discussions, but fund usage remains uncertain.
- EU leaders will meet on March 6 to discuss Ukraine aid and defense funding. The summit follows Trump's talks with Russia, excluding Ukraine and the EU. Leaders will explore reallocating existing EU funds rather than joint borrowing.

Middle East

- Israeli FM Gideon Saar will meet EU officials in Brussels to discuss Gaza's reconstruction and regional politics. The EU-Israel Association Council will address security, humanitarian concerns, and future cooperation. The meeting follows Trump's controversial proposal on Gaza's future.
- Syria's new authorities will begin a national dialogue conference on February 25 to outline a post-Assad political roadmap. The event will discuss constitutional reforms, economic policies, and institutional changes, with elections expected in four years.

Pakistan

- An IMF mission will visit Islamabad from Feb 24-28 to discuss \$1 billion in climate financing under the Resilience and Sustainability Trust. A separate IMF mission will arrive in March for a review of Pakistan's \$7 billion bailout program.

United Kingdom

- Macron and Starmer will visit Washington next week to urge Trump against a rushed Ukraine ceasefire with Putin. They aim to secure military guarantees and maintain Europe's role in the conflict.
- UK Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds and India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal will restart trade talks in New Delhi on Monday. Key issues include British whisky tariffs and Indian visa demands, with discussions marking the first formal talks under the UK Labour government.

United States

- The U.S. expects to finalize a deal this week for access to Ukraine's critical mineral deposits, following pressure from President Trump. Ukrainian President Zelenskiy, who initially rejected U.S. demands, is now expected to sign after negotiations.
- U.S. President Donald Trump expects Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit but gave no timeline. He hinted at a possible new trade deal, which could ease tariffs. Trump and Xi spoke before his inauguration, discussing TikTok, trade, and Taiwan.

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