



India's \$7 billion electric bus plan, and other city-focused stories you need to read



Top city and urbanization stories: India is due to spend \$7 billion on electric buses in 170 cities; and more. Image: REUTERS/Stringer India

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- This monthly round-up brings you some of the latest news on cities and urbanization.
- Top city and urbanization stories: India is due to spend \$7 billion on electric buses in 170 cities; How July heatwave impacted workers in US cities; Tokyo's tallest office tower revealed.
- For more on the World Economic Forum's city-focused work, visit the [Urban Transformation Hub](#).

1. India's \$7 billion electric bus plan for 170 cities

India has given the green light to a [\\$7 billion plan that aims to introduce electric buses in nearly 170 cities](#), as part of the country's efforts to reduce air pollution and promote sustainable transportation.

The government eventually wants to introduce 50,000 electric buses nationwide, at an estimated cost of \$12 billion. It will not only help improve air quality but also create job opportunities in the manufacturing and maintenance of electric buses and their components.

India is grappling with [severe air pollution problems](#), particularly in its major cities. It's the second most polluted country globally, according to the Air Quality Life Index, and average life expectancy is reduced by 6.3 years due to air quality.

The use of electric buses is seen as a crucial step towards addressing this issue, as they do not produce [tailpipe emissions](#).

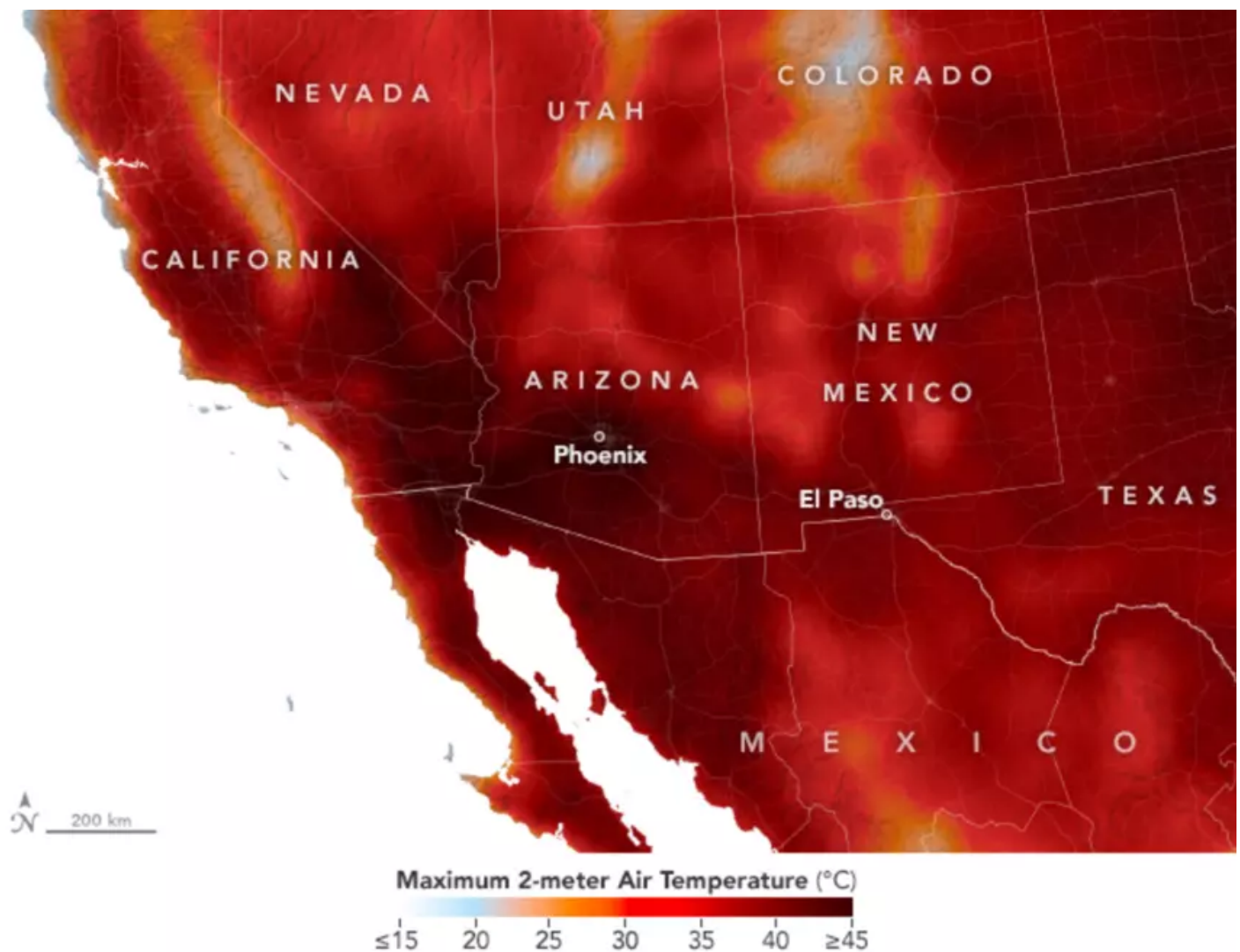
2. Extreme heat hit workers' hours, small businesses in US cities



Businesses were forced to close early as soaring temperatures kept customers indoors, leading to reduced paid working hours for employees, according to small business payroll company Homebase.

In cities where the heatwave was strongest, including New Orleans and Memphis, slowdowns were higher than the national average for the first two weeks of July.

Small business employees in New Orleans worked 5.7% fewer hours than they did in June as the southern city recorded 26 days of temperatures at 32°C.



How the heatwave looked across the US in July 2023.

Image: NASA Earth Observatory

Businesses in those cities where the heatwaves were weaker and shorter were actually able to increase operating hours. Boston had just two days at 32°C – and saw the largest month-to-



said Homebase CEO John Waldmann.

3. News in brief: Other top city and urbanization stories this month

San Francisco has emerged as [the new epicentre of the "robotaxi" industry](#) following a recent vote by the California Public Utilities Commission to allow Alphabet Inc's Waymo and General Motors' Cruise to carry passengers through the city, Reuters reports.

After years of clean-up efforts, the river Seine will be reopened for swimming in 2024 to host Olympic swimming events. The revival of swimming in the Seine is part of a global trend of [improving the quality of city rivers](#).

Japan's Mori Building has revealed [Tokyo's tallest office tower](#) as part of a larger business and residential complex. At 330m, the Mori JP Tower will provide office space for approximately 20,000 employees and accommodation for 3,500 residents.



of up to 30 million jobs by March 2030, in addition to the current 70 million, according to an industry report.

Office [vacancy rates in Australian cities](#) have reached levels not seen since the 1990s, according to data from the Property Council of Australia. Vacancies in Melbourne's central business district rose the most.

Zhengzhou city in [China has introduced measures to support its property market](#), which includes easing home resale restrictions. The country is also set to relax restrictions for citizens wanting to settle in [small and medium-sized cities](#).

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4. More on urban transformation on Agenda

Electric vehicle sales continue to skyrocket, with a 71% increase in May in Europe. Governments are increasing financial support to boost EV adoption, but challenges remain to mainstream EVs. A new task force, spearheaded by the World Economic Forum, is investigating [how cities and the private sector can channel investment in the EV revolution](#) – its Urban Mobility Project Lead and two C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group members explain.

The height and density of [a city's skyline can be an indicator of its economic development](#), write two economics professors. More compact cities have lower emissions of climate-changing pollutants, while a city with a skyline of luxury apartments may not be as inclusive as a city with a more diverse mix of high-rise buildings.

[Cities that ban polluting vehicles improve the health of citizens](#), according to a new study in *The Lancet*. London's low emission zone has already cut nitrogen dioxide emissions in the inner



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