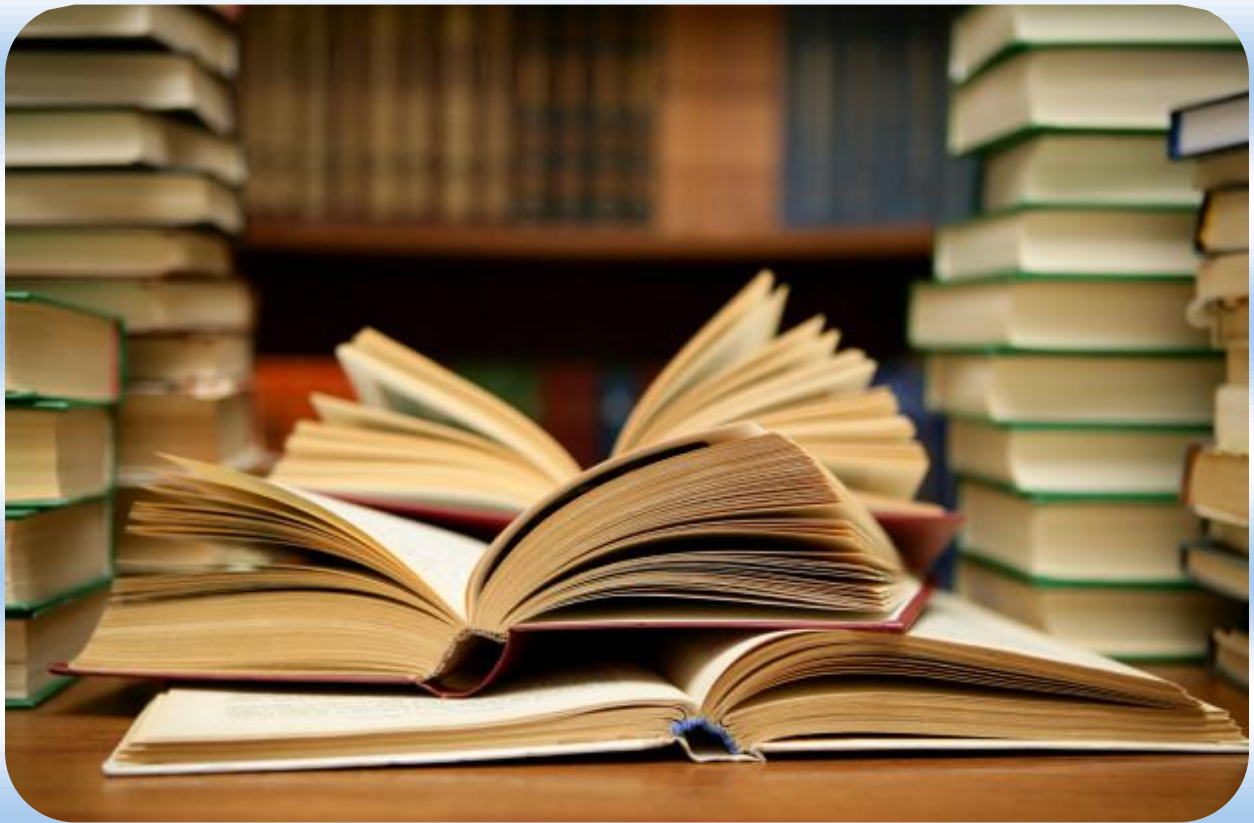


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



DECEMBER-2021

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

President's Standard 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron

President Ram Nath Kovind presented the President's Standard award to the 22nd Missile Vessels Squadron of the Indian Navy at a ceremony held in the naval dockyard on Wednesday morning.



Imaging X – Ray Polarimetry Explorer IXPE Mission

On December 9, NASA launched a new mission named Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer or IXPE. Onboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket, it was sent to its orbit from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. IXPE observatory is a joint effort of NASA and the Italian Space Agency. The mission will study "the most extreme and mysterious objects in the universe – supernova remnants, supermassive black holes, and dozens of other high-energy objects."

UNICEF India to roll out five-year plan

UNICEF India is designing an ambitious and innovative five-year country programme that has social policy as a priority across all sectors, Hyun Hee Ban, Chief of Social Policy, Monitoring, and Evaluation, UNICEF India, has said. Talking to The Hindu on a visit to the State along with K.L. Rao, Chief, Social Policy, UNICEF Office for Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Ms. Ban said UNICEF wanted to talk with all stakeholders and get insights on how what could be done better in the new environment after COVID-19.

Chennai to be developed as a 'sponge city'

It is time to adopt innovative water management strategies and transform Chennai into a sponge city to tackle urban flooding. The concept of sponge city is to make urban areas more permeable, have more open spaces store rainwater and allow it to percolate to aquifers. The Water Resources Department is mulling over possibility of digging recharge shafts in smaller waterbodies in and around the city. These recharge shafts that could be dug up to a depth of 80-90 feet will help replenish water table.

140 million free health IDs generated

The government has made a provision for every citizen to generate a health ID free of cost and over 140 million such IDs have been created till the first week of December, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar informed the Lok Sabha on Friday.



Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin extended till March 2024

The Cabinet Wednesday approved the extension of the Centre's flagship housing-for-all scheme, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), beyond March 2021 till March 2024 to achieve the target of constructing 2.95 crore houses. Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said financial assistance would be provided for the construction of the 155.75 lakh houses remaining as on March, 31, 2021.

NCW launches 'She is a Changemaker' programme

The National Commission for Women (NCW) launched 'She is a Changemaker' programme for women politicians on December 7, 2021. The pan-India capacity building programme has been launched for women representatives at all levels, from gram panchayats to the parliament including political workers and office bearers of national and state-level political parties. The capacity building programme will be undertaken in coordination with region-wise training institutes. The main objective of the programme will be to undertake capacity building of women political leaders.

Indian Air Force helicopter crash

In February 2016, Rostec State Corporation of Russia handed over to India the final batch of three helicopters of the contract for 151 Mi-17V-5 helicopters. They were manufactured by Kazan Helicopter Plant, part of Russian Helicopters.



NASA launches Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD)

On December 7, around 3.50 pm IST, NASA launched its new Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD) — the agency's first-ever laser communications system — from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. The LCRD will help the agency test optical communication in space.



Madhya Pradesh implements Police Commissionerate system in Bhopal & Indore

MP home minister Narottam Mishra informed that the notification has been issued in this regard and two commissioners will be appointed in Bhopal and Indore, who will also have magisterial powers. "The ADG rank officers will be appointed as commissioners. Two officers of inspector general of police will be appointed as additional police commissioners and eight officers of superintendent of police ranks will be appointed as deputy commissioners," said the minister.

UNESCO adds Durga Puja to its Intangible Heritage list

KOLKATA: The UNESCO on Wednesday accorded heritage status to Kolkata's Durga puja festival, bringing glory to the country, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lauding the move.



Ladakh gets its First FM Radio Station

Ladakh on Tuesday got its first ever FM radio station in its capital city Leh, officials said. Advisor Ladakh, Umang Narula launched the first-ever Top FM radio in Leh, they said. The frequency for Leh & Kargil will be 91.1 FM and it will cover 50 kilometres aerial distance in radius, they said.



UNICEF climate change curriculum in Maharashtra schools

MUMBAI: The state will introduce changes in the school curriculum on environment from next academic session. The decision on inclusion of new curriculum in Class 1-8 will be taken by the school education department. The state environment department on Monday signed a Memorandum Understanding with the school education department and the UNICEF for the introduction of the new curriculum which includes biodiversity conservation, solid waste management and individual and community health.

Bank of Baroda launches “bob World Wave”- wearable payment solution

Bank of Baroda (BoB) has launched a solution for digital banking payments, named bob World Wave. Wearable technology is witnessing the rise of tremendous interest across the world and lenders are using this opportunity to adopt the more convenient and cashless digital payments systems. “This is an innovative solution, intended to perfectly deliver preventive health actions as well as easier payment transactions.

What is ‘Solar hamam’?

Aimed at providing clean energy solutions to households in the cold mountainous regions for heating purposes and also to achieve forest conservation, a solar water-heating system, ‘solar hamam’, is proving popular among the villagers in Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Uttarakhand.



Wholesale inflation record high in November

New Delhi: The wholesale price-based inflation surged to a record high of 14.23% in November from 12.45% in October (on a year-on-year basis), mainly due to hardening of prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum and natural gas. Wholesale Price-based Index (WPI) inflation (base year: 2011-12) has remained in double digits for eight consecutive months beginning April. "The high rate of inflation in November 2021 is primarily due to a rise in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum and natural gas, chemicals and chemical products, food products etc.

IIT-D develops test to detect Omicron in 90 min

Researchers at IIT Delhi's Kusuma School of Biological Sciences have developed an RT-PCR based assay for the specific detection of the Omicron (B.1.1.529.1) variant of SARS-CoV-2. The assay is based on detecting specific mutations, which are present in the Omicron variant and absent in other currently circulating variants of SARS-CoV-2. Primer sets targeting these unique mutations in the S gene were designed for the specific amplification of either the Omicron variant or other currently circulating variants of SARS-CoV-2 and tested using real time PCR.

India's Harnaaz Sandhu crowned Miss Universe 2021

Actor-model Harnaaz Sandhu made history on December 13 as she was crowned Miss Universe 2021 beating contestants from 80 countries— 21 years after India last brought home the title. Only two Indians before Ms. Sandhu have won the title of Miss Universe— actors Sushmita Sen in 1994 and Lara Dutta in 2000.



'Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code' in the News

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday told the Lok Sabha that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has no proposal under consideration to scrap Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that deals with sedition. Mr. Rijiju also informed the House that "the question of law" regarding Section 124A is pending for adjudication before the Supreme Court. "The Ministry of Home Affairs has informed that there is no proposal under consideration to scrap Sec 124A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Further, the question of law regarding Section 124A is pending for adjudication before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

PM to open Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

The 400-metre-long Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi connecting the ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva to the banks of the Ganges would be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday.



Human Rights Day 2021

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December — the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document, which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Available in more than 500 languages, it is the most translated document in the world.

India, Iran and Uzbekistan discuss on Joint use of Chabahar port

In a significant move, India, Iran and Uzbekistan on Tuesday held talks on joint use of the Chabahar Port while underlining its important role in enhancing regional connectivity. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the participants discussed further development of transportation corridor around the port.



CCI approves acquisition of Air India stake by Tata sons

Competition Commission has approved Tata Group's proposed acquisition of debt-laden Air India as well as its two subsidiaries. The Rs 18,000 crore-deal that includes the winning bidder Talace taking over Rs 15,300 crore-worth debt, is a major step in the government's efforts over the years to revive the ailing airline.



Why did CCI slap ₹200 crore fine on Amazon?

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Friday froze its approval given in November 2019 to Amazon's investment in a Future Group unit on the grounds that the U.S. e-commerce company had suppressed the scope and full details of its investment while seeking regulatory approval. The antitrust regulator also imposed a penalty of ₹200 crore on Amazon for failing to notify the details of its 'combination', as required in law. It also imposed a separate penalty of ₹2 crore for suppressing the actual scope and purpose of the combination, a term used in competition law for acquisition, merger or amalgamation of two or more enterprises.

ISRO developing a SSLV with Private Participation

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Thursday said that the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is developing a Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) with private participation and it will be launched in the first quarter of 2022. In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha today, Jitendra Singh informed that the SSLV will provide a payload capability of 500 kg to a 500 km planar orbit.



Assam's Manohari Gold Tea auctioned for Rs 1 lakh/kg

GUWAHATI: A specialty tea from Assam's Dibrugarh district was on Tuesday auctioned for Rs 99,999 per kg, the "highest price" ever fetched in any tea auction in the country, an official said. The Manohari Tea Estate sold 1 kg of its 'Manohari Gold' variety to Sourabh Tea Traders, Gauhati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) Secretary Priyanuz Dutta said.



Delhi to set up first Teachers University

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi Cabinet has approved a proposal to establish the 'Delhi Teachers University'. After the cabinet meeting, Kejriwal said in a press conference, "This University will prepare highly qualified and well-trained teachers in Delhi itself. As per the commitment of the Delhi Government, 'Delhi Teachers University' Bill 2021 will be placed before the Delhi Vidhan Sabha in the coming session."

ICRA's forecast of Indian GDP Growth

Ratings agency Icri on Monday revised up its 2021-22 real GDP growth estimate for India to 9 per cent from the earlier 8.5 per cent. A ramp-up in COVID-19 vaccination, healthy advance estimates of kharif (summer) crop and faster government spending were the factors which led to the revision, the agency said in a statement. It can be noted that after the 7.3 per cent contraction in 2020-21, there were expectations of a higher growth number in 2021-22.

Roll-out of 5G services in India

Commercial 5G services will be rolled out in 13 cities in India, including the metropolises, in 2022, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) said in a statement on Monday. These cities are Delhi, Gurugram, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, and Jamnagar.



INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

BWF World Tour 2021: PV Sindhu wins Silver

Indian badminton ace P V Sindhu settled for a silver medal at the BWF World Tour Finals after going down meekly against Korean teen sensation An Seyoung in the summit clash, here on Sunday.



US boycott Olympics

The US has announced a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in China - a move that has been heavily criticised by Beijing. The White House said no official delegation would be sent to the Games because of concerns about China's human rights record.



Germany: Olaf Scholz takes over from Merkel as Chancellor

Olaf Scholz has been sworn in as Germany's new chancellor, formally taking power after Angela Merkel's historic 16 years as leader. He promised he would do all he could to work towards a new start for Germany. As she left the chancellery in Berlin, ending a 31-year political career, Mrs Merkel told her former vice-chancellor to approach the task "with joy".



Catherine Russell to head UNICEF

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on December 10 announced the appointment of Catherine Russell, an assistant to U.S. President Joe Biden, as the next head of the U.N. children's agency UNICEF. Ms. Russell also heads the White House Office of Presidential Personnel and served as the State Department's Ambassador-at-large for global women's issues from 2013 to 2017. She will succeed Henrietta Fore, who resigned in July because of a family health issue. She is married and has four children.

Hong Kong's 'Zero COVID' policy

The first thing that hits travellers landing in Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport is the emptiness. Hong Kong International Airport (HKG to frequent fliers) used to be among the world's busiest. It handled 71.5 million passengers in 2019, which is close to 2,00,000 a day. Now, a busy day means 1,500 passengers at most. On a lean day, sometimes only half that number walks through the airport's doors. When a passenger steps off the plane, they can walk minutes on end without seeing another passenger.

UAE announces 4.5-day workweek

The United Arab Emirates announced all government entities will adopt a new work-week schedule consisting of four-and-a-half days with Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday forming the new weekend. The move, announced by state news agency WAM on Tuesday, will come into effect on January 1, 2022, making the working week more in line with Western schedules.

UNGA grants Observer Status to International Solar Alliance

The United Nations General Assembly has granted Observer Status to the International Solar Alliance (ISA), according to India's Permanent Ambassador to the UN, T S Tirumurti. The ISA was conceived as a joint effort by India and France to mobilise efforts against climate change through the deployment of solar energy solutions. It was presented by the leaders of the two countries at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21).

Israeli PM's first official visit to UAE

Israel's prime minister announced that he would make the first official visit to the United Arab Emirates on Sunday as part of a blitz of regional diplomacy amid the backdrop of struggling nuclear talks with Iran. Naftali Bennett's office said he will be meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed and discussing strengthening economic and military ties. The UAE visit will be the first by an Israeli prime minister. Israel and the UAE had long enjoyed clandestine security cooperation.

Myanmar: NU Government officially accepts Tether cryptocurrency

A parallel government led by the supporters of Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi recognised Tether as an official currency for local use after the group began fundraising for a campaign that seeks to topple the military regime.



Max Verstappen wins Formula One world title

Max Verstappen clinched his first Formula One world title when he won a dramatic season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday, but only after two protests from Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes team were rejected. Just as it seemed Hamilton was heading for his eighth world title, Verstappen took advantage of a crash by Nicholas Latifi that effectively set up a one-lap dash for the title.

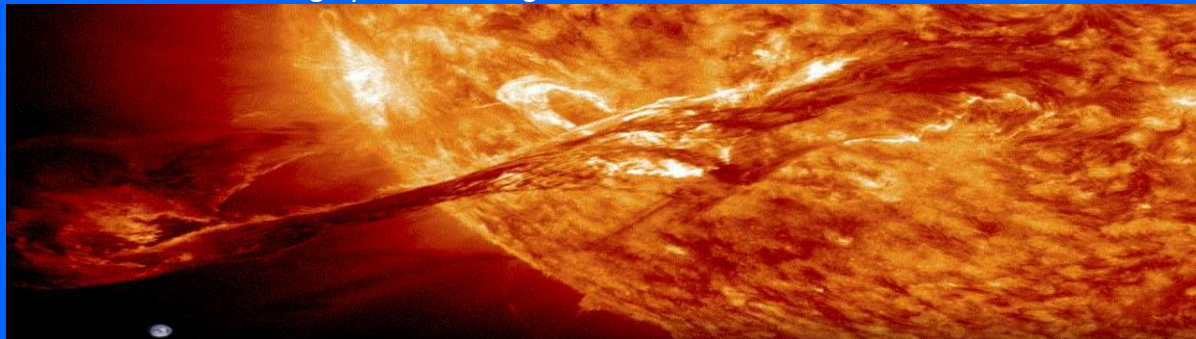


US, Australia, Japan to jointly fund undersea cable in Pacific

CANBERRA — The United States, Australia and Japan said Sunday they will jointly fund the construction of an undersea cable to boost internet access in three tiny Pacific countries, as the Western allies seek to counter rising Chinese influence in the region. The three Western allies said they would develop the cable to provide faster internet to Nauru, Kiribati and the Federated States of Micronesia. "This will support increased economic growth, drive development opportunities, and help to improve living standards as the region recovers from the severe impacts of COVID-19," a joint statement from the United States, Japan and Australia said.

NASA's Parker Solar Probe enters Sun's corona

London: A spacecraft launched by NASA has done what was once thought impossible. On April 28, the Parker Solar Probe successfully entered the corona of the Sun -- an extreme environment that's roughly 2 million degrees Fahrenheit.



Gabriel Boric to become Chile's next President

In what was expected to be a tight race, the 35-year-old former student protest leader defeated his far-right rival José Antonio Kast by 10 points. Mr Boric told supporters he would look after democracy, promising curbs on Chile's neoliberal free market economy. He will lead a country that has been rocked in recent years by mass protests against inequality and corruption. Mr Boric's victory prompted celebrations on the streets of the capital Santiago, with his supporters waving flags and honking car horns.

WHO gives emergency approval for Covovax vaccine

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced on Friday it has granted Emergency Use Listing (EUL) to Covovax, the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) vaccine developed by the Serum Institute of India (SII) in partnership with the US-based Novavax. "Covovax was assessed under the WHO EUL procedure based on the review of data on quality, safety and efficacy, a risk management plan, programmatic sustainability, and manufacturing site inspections carried out by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).

Typhoon Rai hits Philippines

Super Typhoon Rai - with winds of about 195km/h (120mph) - sent some 400,000 people running for safety when it hit the country's south-eastern islands. At least 500 people were injured and 56 others have been reported missing by local police. Rescue teams have described scenes of "complete carnage". But establishing the scale of the losses is difficult, as communication to a number of areas has been cut off. There are fears widespread landslides and flooding may have claimed more lives. "Many areas have no power, no communications, very little water," the chair of the Philippines Red Cross, Richard Gordon, told the BBC. "There are some areas that look like it has been bombed worse than World War Two."

Russia launches Draft agreement with NATO on security measures

Russia has published a draft agreement it has proposed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on measures to ensure the security of both sides. Russia and NATO shall not strengthen their security individually, including in the framework of international organisations, military alliances or coalitions at the expense of the security of others, read the document published by the Russian Foreign Ministry, Xinhua news agency reported.

F1 champion Lewis Hamilton receives knighthood

Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton received his knighthood from Prince Charles at Windsor Castle on Wednesday for his services to motorsport. A knighthood is a title that is conferred on a person by a British king or queen for their high achievement and services to their country within their industry.



AI Prosecutor: China's recent AI project

The artificial intelligence 'prosecutor' received training for five years – from 2015 to 2020 – during which it went through 17,000 cases. The Chinese researchers claimed that it was able to identify and press charges for common crimes. China has been making rapid advancements in the technology field. And now, Chinese scientists have claimed that they have developed a machine that can charge people with crime using artificial intelligence.

'Artificial sun': What is China's latest experiment?

China is experimenting with an "artificial sun," dubbed Experiential Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST), to make way for clean energy in the future. The device setup is a fusion reactor which ran successfully for almost 20 minutes at a stunning 70 million degrees Celsius in a recent test.



China's Draft Law on the Protection of Women Rights

China is considering strengthening its laws on women's rights to provide more robust protection against gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. The draft regulations come amid the rise of a nascent #MeToo movement in China, which activists say has been hampered by the country's strict regime of censorship and oppression against all signs of dissent.



What are the features of UNSC resolution on Afghan assistance?

The UN Security Council on Wednesday unanimously adopted a US-proposed resolution that facilitates humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, which is on the verge of economic collapse, while keeping funds out of Taliban hands. India supported the resolution to grant exemption from sanctions for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan but with a rider. Without naming Taliban or Pakistan, India desired that the UNSC should equally exercise its oversight on the delivery of assistance as well as guard against any possible diversion of funds.

66-million-year-old dinosaur embryo found in China

Scientists have announced the discovery of a perfectly preserved dinosaur embryo that was preparing to hatch from its egg, just like a chicken. The embryo was discovered in Ganzhou in southern China and researchers estimate it is at least 66 million years old. It is believed to be a toothless theropod dinosaur, or oviraptorosaur, and has been named Baby Yingliang. Researcher Dr Fion Waisum Ma said it is "the best dinosaur embryo ever found in history". The discovery has also given researchers a greater understanding of the link between dinosaurs and modern birds.

ADB to provide USD 350 million to improve access to urban services in India

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide USD 350 million loan to improve access to urban services in India by accelerating policy actions and reforms to enhance service delivery and promote performance-based central fiscal transfers to urban local bodies (ULBs). The ADB will provide knowledge and advisory support to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in programme implementation, including monitoring and evaluation, the multi-lateral agency said in a statement.

UAE announces to End Censorship in Cinematic releases

The United Arab Emirates announced on Sunday that it will no longer censor films released in cinemas, the country's latest effort to boost its brand as a liberal hub attractive to foreigners. Instead of cutting sensitive scenes that could offend traditional Islamic sensibilities, the Emirati Media Regulatory Authority will introduce a new 21+ age category for viewers. The movies will be screened in cinemas according to their international version, the authority said in a Twitter post.

Global Environment and Climate Action Citizen Award

Dubai (UAE), December 26 (ANI/PNN): Surat's noted industrialist Viral Desai, popularly known as Greenman for his love for the environment, has been awarded the prestigious Global Environment and Climate Action Citizen Award in Dubai.



China- Elon Musk Space Tussle

Chinese citizens lashed out online against billionaire Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on Monday after China complained that its space station was forced to take evasive action to avoid collision with satellites launched by Musk's Starlink programme. The satellites from Starlink Internet Services, a division of Musk's SpaceX aerospace company, had two "close encounters" with the Chinese space station on July 1 and Oct. 21, according to a document submitted by China earlier this month to the U.N.'s space agency.

Iran's new Space Launch

Iran's space launch on Thursday has failed to put its three payloads into orbit after the rocket was unable to reach the required speed, a defence ministry spokesman said in remarks carried on state television.



World's longest Metro line opened in Shanghai

China's biggest city and a global financial hub, Shanghai is going to extend a new driverless and longest metro line on Thursday reported by The Global Times. With the latest inclusion of metro lines, the total length of Shanghai's metro network will extend to 831 km, continuing to be the longest in the world.



BRICS Bank: Which is the new member?

BEIJING : The BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) on Wednesday announced that it will add Egypt as its new member. Egypt is the fourth new member admitted into NDB, after Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Uruguay, further expanding the bank's global outreach.

