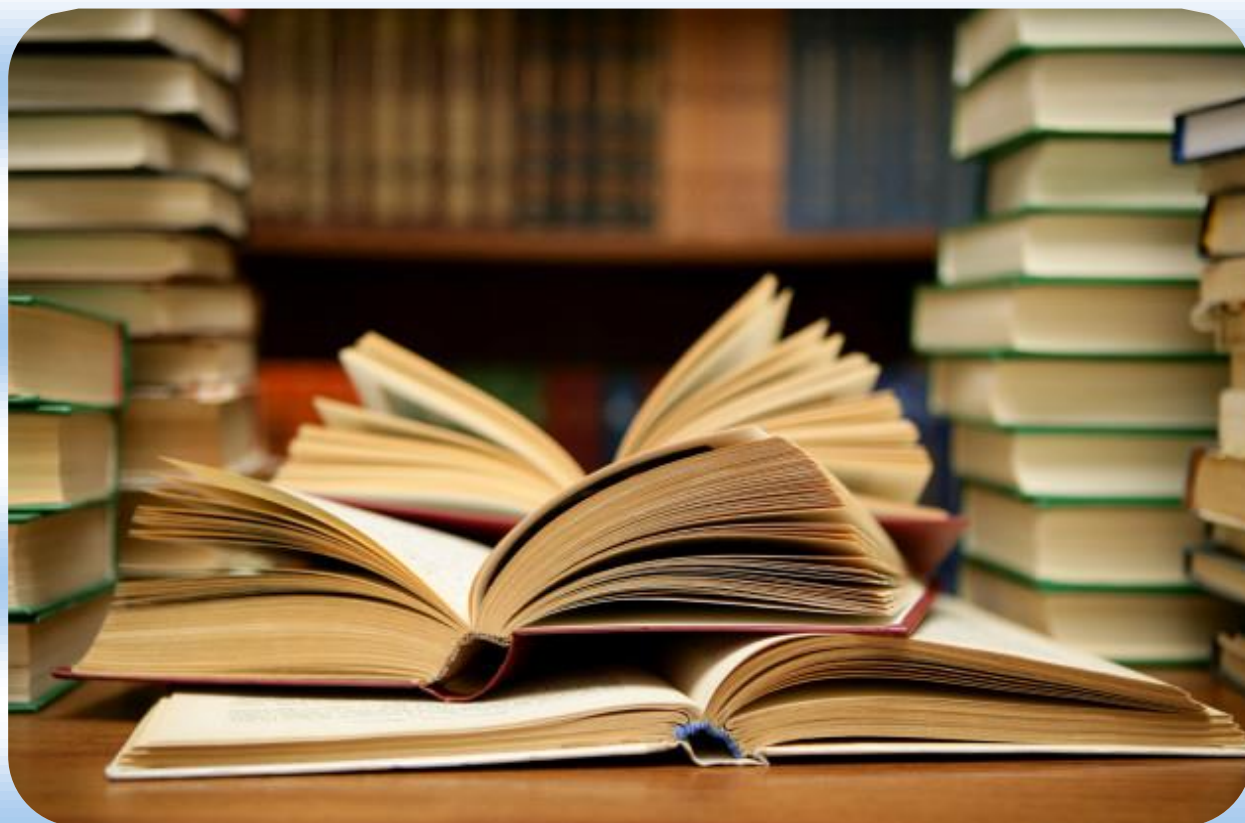


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



JANUARY-2021

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Light House Project

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday laid the foundation of six Light House Projects, as part of the Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India) initiative, in Indore, Rajkot, Chennai, Ranchi, Agartala and Lucknow via videoconference. About 1,000 houses at each location are to be constructed in a year, using six distinct technologies from a basket of 54 such technologies shortlisted under the GHTC-India, 2019.

RBI Digital Payments Index

The five parameters based on which RBI would measure the penetration of digital payments included payment enablers, payment infrastructure – demand-side and supply-side factors, payment performance, and consumer centricity.



Reliance Industries Fined

MUMBAI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) penalised Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and its chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani as well as two other entities for their alleged role in carrying out manipulative trades in Reliance Petroleum Ltd (RPL NSE 0.00 %) in 2007. RIL didn't respond to queries but has challenged an earlier Sebi order in the matter in the Supreme Court. In its Friday order, the regulator imposed a penalty of Rs 25 crore on RIL and Rs 15 crore on Ambani.

RoDTEP Scheme

Benefit of Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme will be extended to all export goods from January 1, 2021, the finance ministry said in a statement Thursday. Under the scheme, the embedded central, state and local duties or taxes will get refunded and credited in an exporter's ledger account with customs. This can be used to pay basic customs duty on imported goods. The credits can also be transferred to other importers.

IFSCA in IOSCO

International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) on Friday said that it has become an associate member of the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO). The IOSCO works closely with the G20 nations and the Financial Stability Board (FSB), in setting up the standards for strengthening the securities markets, said IFSCA. The IOSCO Objectives and Principles of Securities Regulation have been endorsed by FSB as one of the key standards for sound financial systems.

Kochi-Mangaluru Natural Gas Pipeline

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that as part of efforts to making India a natural gas-based economy, 10,000 more CNG (compressed natural gas) stations would be opened and several lakh PNG (piped natural gas) household connections given in the coming days. Inaugurating the 450-km Kochi-Kootanad-Mangaluru LNG (liquefied natural gas) pipeline through video conferencing on Tuesday, Mr. Modi said the facility was part of his government's "one nation-one gas grid" policy.

Sagarmala Seaplane Services Project

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways to initiate Seaplane services on select routes through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) involving airline operators. The project execution and implementation will be through Sagarmala Development Company Ltd (SDCL), which is under the administrative control of the Ministry, said a release.



India's Rice Exports to Vietnam

Vietnam, the world's third biggest exporter of rice, has started buying the grain from rival India for the first time in decades after local prices jumped to their highest in nine years amid limited domestic supplies, four industry officials told Reuters. The purchases underscore tightening supplies in Asia, which could lift rice prices in 2021 and even force traditional buyers of rice from Thailand and Vietnam to switch to India — the world's biggest exporter of the grain. Indian traders have contracted to export 70,000 tonnes of 100% broken rice for January and February shipments at about \$310 per tonne on a free-on-board basis, the industry officials.

Floating Solar Energy Project

Bhopal: The world's largest floating 600 MW solar energy project to be constructed at Omkareshwar dam on Narmada river in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh will begin power generation by year 2022-23.



DRDO Biodigester Mk II technology in metro rail

Government of India's premier research agency Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will install its eco-friendly bio-digester units across the facilities operated by Maharashtra Metro Rail Corporation (MAHA-METRO), which help conserve water and protect the environment.



Payment Infrastructure Development Funds

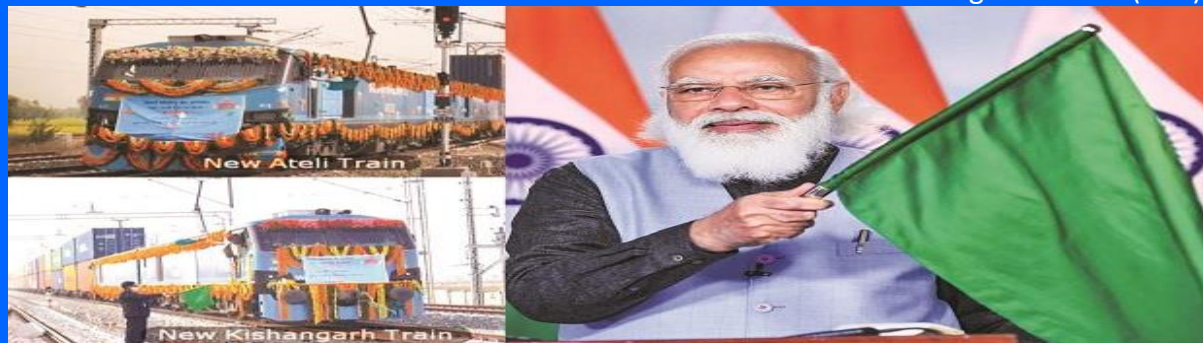
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday announced the operationalisation of the payment infrastructure development fund (PIDF) scheme, which is intended to subsidise deployment of payment acceptance infrastructure in tier-3 to tier-6 centres, with a special focus on the north-eastern states of the country. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday announced the operationalisation of the payment infrastructure development fund (PIDF) scheme, which is intended to subsidise deployment of payment acceptance infrastructure in tier-3 to tier-6 centres, with a special focus on the north-eastern states of the country.

RBI forms Academic Advisory Council for Supervisory College

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an academic advisory council with former deputy governor N S Vishwanathan as the chairperson to advise the full-time director of the central bank's College of Supervisors (CoS). Members of the council include Arijit Basu, former managing director of State Bank of India (SBI); Paresh Sukthankar, former deputy MD at HDFC Bank; S Raghunath, professor at IIM-Bangalore; Tathagata Bandyopadhyay, professor at IIM-Ahmedabad; and Subrata Sarkar professor at Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai.

India's first double stack long-haul container train

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday flagged off the world's first double-stack long-haul container train from New Ateli in Haryana to New Kishanganj in Rajasthan. He also launched the 306-km Rewari-Madar section of the Western dedicated freight corridor (DFC).



Central Government Scheme for Industrial Development of J&K

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha announced a Rs 28,400-crore industrial development scheme on Thursday that he said would usher in socio-economic development of the Union Territory. The scheme, Sinha said, would encourage new investments and expansion, nurture existing industries and ensure employment to 450,000 people. Addressing a presser in Jammu, he said the scheme would take industrial development to the block level and promote far-flung areas of J&K.

Single Window Clearance System for Coal Mines

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday will launch the 'Single Window Clearance System', an online platform to obtain clearances for smooth operationalization of coal mines. The 'Single Window Clearance System' will be launched at 11 am. In a tweet, the Ministry of Home Affairs informed about this virtual ceremony, which will be held in the presence of Union Minister of Coal Pralhad Joshi. "Home Minister Amit Shah will be launching 'Single Window Clearance System' tomorrow.

Khadi Prakritik Paint

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said initiatives such as "Khadi Prakritik Paint" will strengthen the rural economy and has the potential to become a ₹6,000-crore industry soon. Launching the eco-friendly and non-toxic paint with antibacterial properties by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Minister Gadkari said, initiatives such as KVIC paint could lead to 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and arrest the exodus of rural population towards cities.

Supreme Court suspends implementation of Farms Laws

New Delhi: The Supreme Court "suspended" the "implementation" of three farm laws in a bid to persuade farmers agitating against them to come to the "negotiating table." It also set up a four-member expert committee to "negotiate" between the farmers and the government. Farmers' groups, pushing for repeal, have said they won't appear before the committee. "Negotiations between the farmers' bodies and the government have not yet yielded any results so far," the three-judge bench led by chief justice SA Bobde said on Tuesday.

New Foreign Trade Policy

Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Tuesday said that India's new Foreign Trade Policy 2021-2026, under formulation, will come into effect from April 1, 2021, for five years and will strive to make the country a leader in international trade.



RBI Working Group on Digital Lending

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a working group on digital lending — including online platforms and mobile apps — to study all aspects of digital lending activities in the regulated financial sector as well as by unregulated players. This is to ensure that an appropriate regulatory approach is put in place. "Digital lending has the potential to make access to financial products and services more fair, efficient and inclusive. From a peripheral supporting role a few years ago, FinTech-led innovation is now at the core of the design, pricing and delivery of financial products and services," the RBI said in a notification.

RBI Financial Stability Report

Banks' gross non-performing assets may rise to 13.5% by September 2021, from 7.5% in September 2020 under the baseline scenario, according to Financial Stability Report (FSR) released by the Reserve Bank of India. If the macroeconomic environment worsens into a severe stress scenario, the GNPA ratio may escalate to 14.8%, the report said. "The stress tests indicate that the GNPA ratio of all scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) may increase from 7.5% in September 2020 to 13.5% by September 2021 under the baseline scenario," the FSR report added.

WE Hub: Women Entrepreneurs Hub

WE HUB, India's first state-led incubator to foster and promote women entrepreneurship to start-up, scale-up and accelerate with global market access, today announced its partnership with i-Hub, Government of Gujarat, to encourage and support startups in raising capital.



Kamalam: Gujarat renames Dragon Fruit

Gandhinagar: Dragon fruit will be known as 'Kamalam' in Gujarat. The state government has decided to rename the fruit as the outer shape of the fruit resembles a lotus, said Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.



Paperless Budget: Mobile app launched ahead of Budget 2021

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched Union Budget mobile app on Saturday, January 23, ahead of Union Budget 2021-22. The mobile app, available for both Android and iOS, is designed to provide union budget information to various stakeholders including citizens of India at the click of a button. This information will be accessible after the completion of the budget speech by the Finance Minister in the Parliament on February 1.

Draft policy on “Udyog Sahayak Enterprises Network”

A new policy on the anvil, the Udyog Sahayak Enterprises Network (USENET), may give a major fillip to the growth-stunted nano and micro-enterprises in India’s informal sector. The proposed framework, whose draft was jointly put together by the Azim Premji University, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), is aimed at providing a slew of growth-driven services to over 62 million nano and micro-enterprises that currently employ over 100 million people.

4-tier structure for Tighter Regulation of NBFCs

India’s non-banking finance companies (NBFC) need tighter regulation through creation of a multilayer model, said a discussion paper by the Reserve Bank of India on Friday. The paper proposed a structure to categorise NBFCs, or shadow banks, depending on their size and interconnectedness with the system. NBFCs in the lower layer will be known as NBFC-Base Layer (NBFC-BL). NBFCs in the middle layer will be known as NBFC-Middle Layer (NBFC-ML).

What is Green Tax?

Green tax will reduce the pollution level, and make the polluters pay for pollution. It will dissuade people from using old polluting vehicles and switch to more pollution-friendly alternatives.



India’s New Central Bank Digital Currency

In a recent note, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has mentioned that it is working on developing its own digital legal tender that has the backing of the state. This is not the first time that the central bank has spoken about such an effort.



What is Economic Survey?

The Economic Survey of India is a detailed report on the performance or state of the economy during the previous year, future challenges and the way forward. It is typically presented a day before the Union Budget. The flagship report is prepared by the Economics Division of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) under the guidance of the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA). Krishnamurthy Subramanian, who was appointed the CEA in December 2018, will present the Survey this year.

Cabinet Clears Policy on PSU Privatization

The Union Cabinet has paved the way for the much-awaited policy on the privatisation of public sector undertakings (PSUs), and its details are expected to be announced in the Union Budget. The policy, which will lay out a road map for the presence of government-owned entities in strategic and non-strategic sectors, was taken up at the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday and was approved, said two government officials in the know.

L&T Bags contract for Bullet Train Project

Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project: On Friday, Infrastructure firm Larsen & Toubro (L&T) announced that it has received an up to Rs 2,500 crore contract for the upcoming and country's first high speed rail corridor project connecting the financial capital and the city of Ahmedabad.



Kolkata's First Young Readers' Boat Library

The idea behind the boat library is that one can read some good collection of books while appreciating the beauty of Kolkata, cruising on the Hooghly. A children's library on a boat was launched in Kolkata on Republic Day, a first of a kind initiative.



India approved two COVID-19 vaccines for Emergency Use

Serum antidote may be rolled out by mid-January; confusion as Bharat Bio yet to submit efficacy data. Two Covid-19 vaccines, including an indigenous one developed by Bharat Biotech together with Indian scientists, received emergency use authorisation (EUA) on Sunday amid criticism that the drugs regulator failed to answer some key questions.

PM to address World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue on Thursday and interact with global CEOs. Over 400 industry leaders from across the globe will attend the session, wherein the Prime Minister will be speaking, through video conferencing, on the Fourth Industrial Revolution — using technology for the good of humanity. The Prime Minister's speech and interaction with CEOs come at a time when the Indian and the world economies are going through an extraordinary period of slowdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy: Punjab Defeats Karnataka

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy QF1 Highlights: Punjab booked their spot in the final four stages of the gripping Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy on Tuesday after beating defending champions Karnataka by nine wickets at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad.



Jammu & Kashmir: GI tag for Gujhi Mushroom

JAMMU: After inclusion of saffron in the list of Geographical Indication (GI) tag products, Jammu & Kashmir wants to claim the same status for gujhi mushrooms from Doda. This mushroom variety is among the world's costliest food items that grows wild and is collected manually.



Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth

NEW DELHI: Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth is set to be the first woman fighter pilot to take part in the Republic Day parade. Kanth will be part of the IAF's tableau that will showcase mock-ups of indigenously-manufactured Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, Light Combat Helicopter Rudra, Rohini radars, and BrahMos.



Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2021

Young minds and children, who have "exceptional abilities" and achieved accomplishments, receive Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar. India's youngest volcanologist Sonit Sisolekar has a unique birthday on January 26 as the 14-year-old became the recipient of Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on the eve of Republic Day 2021.



Padma Awards 2021

105-year-old Pappammal from Tamil Nadu was awarded the Padma Shri on the eve of Republic day for her contribution to organic farming. Inspired by her success, cricketer VVS Laxman tweeted, "Age is only a number. 105-year-old Pappammal is a legend in organic agriculture."



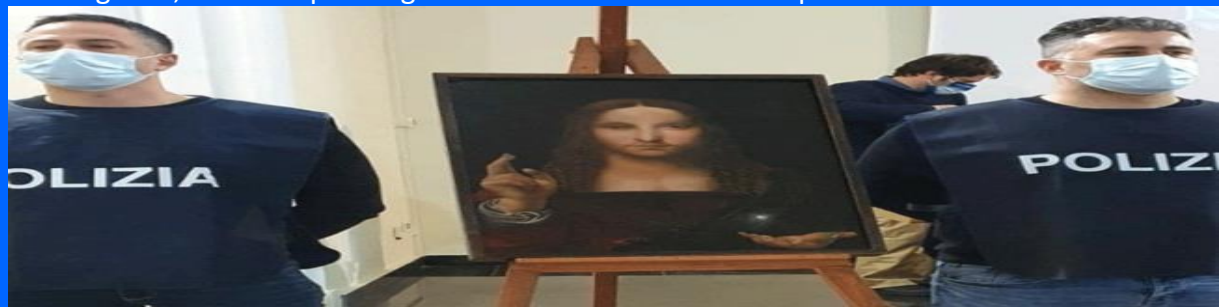
INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Malaysia's 3.7 billion USD package

Malaysia unveiled a 15-billion ringgit (\$3.7 billion) package to help the economy weather the impact from a fresh surge in coronavirus cases. The plan, which includes cash support to the poor, tax breaks and wage subsidies, will help bolster the existing initiatives aimed at helping people blunt the economic impact of the pandemic, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said in a televised address Monday.

Salvator Mundi: 500-year-old stolen Copies recovered

ROME: Italian police have found a 500-year-old copy of Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi in a Naples flat and returned it to a church that had no idea it had been stolen. Officers said late Monday they had arrested the 36-year-old owner of the apartment on suspicion of receiving stolen goods, after the painting was found in his bedroom cupboard.



Bangladesh Forces takes part in Republic Day Event

Marking 50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan war that led to the liberation of Bangladesh, a 122-member contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces participated in the Republic Day parade on Tuesday.



Australia makes changes to its National Anthem

Australia has changed one word in its national anthem to reflect what the Prime Minister called "the spirit of unity" and the country's indigenous population. Prime Minister Scott Morrison on New Year's eve announced that the second line of the anthem, Advance Australia Fair, has been changed from "For we are young and free" to "For we are one and free." The change took effect January 1.

Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act

The US Congress has passed the 'Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act' which will expand the number of scholarships available to Pakistani women to receive higher education under a merit and needs-based programme.



World Bank's 105 million USD loan to improve Waterways in West Bengal

The Government of India, the Government of West Bengal and the World Bank on Tuesday signed a \$105 million project to improve the inland water transport infrastructure in Kolkata, West Bengal, according to the Ministry of Finance. The West Bengal Inland Water Transport, Logistics and Spatial Development Project will facilitate passenger and freight movement across the Hooghly river; undertake spatial planning to improve accessibility in the Kolkata Metropolitan Area; enhance the quality of life of its residents, and contribute to the growth of the state's logistics sector.

WHO: UK Variant of COVID-19 in 41 countries

The 'UK' coronavirus variant had been detected in 41 countries/territories, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in a statement. "As of 5 January 2021, the VOC-202012/01 variant initially detected in the United Kingdom has been detected in a small number of cases in 40 other countries/territories/areas in five of the six WHO regions, and the 501Y.V2 variant initially detected in South African in six other countries/territories/areas," the WHO said.

What is 25th Amendment of US Constitution?

In the immediate aftermath of Donald Trump supporters storming the US Capitol building, which houses both the US Senate as well as the House of Representatives, there are calls by many to either impeach President Trump or invoke the 25th Amendment.



Joe Biden's 1.9 trillion USD plan

US President-elect Joe Biden on Thursday (local time) announced a USD 1.9 trillion plan to revive the country's economy and combat the coronavirus. "We have no time to waste when it comes to getting this virus under control and building our economy back better," the incoming president said. Tweeting ahead of his remarks Biden said: "We need to tackle the public health and economic crises we're facing head-on."

India-Japan MoU in ICT sector

India and Japan on Friday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in the field of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), including 5G standardisation. As per the agreement, both the countries will enhance mutual cooperation in the field of 5G technologies, telecom security, submarine optical fibre cable system to islands of India, spectrum management, smart cities, high-altitude platform for broadband in unconnected areas, disaster management and public safety.

Impeachment of Donald Trump

The House of Representatives on Wednesday made Donald Trump the first US president to be impeached twice, formally charging him with inciting an insurrection just a week after a violent mob of his supporters stormed the Capitol. Here's a guide to what happens next: No. Impeachment refers only to the House, the lower chamber of Congress, bringing charges, or Articles of Impeachment. The next major step is for the Senate, the upper chamber, to have a trial to determine Trump's guilt. A two-thirds majority is needed to convict Trump. If all 100 senators are present for the vote, at least 17 Republicans need to join the Democrats to convict Trump.

Pakistan permits Dubai Royals to hunt “Houbara Bustard”

KARACHI: The federal government has issued at least seven special permits to Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and six other members of the ruling family to hunt the internationally protected bird houbara bustard during the 2020-21 hunting season, it has been learnt.



Europe’s Largest Solar Power Plant: Francisco Pizarro

Spain’s largest utility Iberdrola SA and the French food giant Danone SA sealed an accord to build 590 MW-capacity photo-voltaic plant, the largest in Europe.



UN: China overtakes US for Foreign Direct Investment

China has overtaken the US as the world's top destination for new foreign direct investment, according to UN figures released on Sunday. New investments into America from overseas companies fell by almost half last year, leading to the loss of its number one status.



Nepal's Political Dilemma: PM Oli got expelled from Party

As the political crisis after the dissolution of the parliament in Nepal deepens, the caretaker Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was removed from ruling Nepal Communist Party by a Central Committee Meeting of the splinter group of the party on Sunday. "His membership has been revoked," a spokesperson for the splinter group, Narayan Kaji Shrestha, told news agency ANI. Rival faction of the Communist Party had earlier threatened to expel Oli from the party when they had taken to streets against his decision to dissolve the parliament and order a fresh election.

U.S. President signs "Buy American" Executive Order

President Joe Biden signed an executive order Monday aimed at promoting the "Buy American" agenda he campaigned on last year, which seeks to bolster U.S. manufacturing through the federal procurement process. The executive order directs agencies to strengthen requirements about purchasing products and services from U.S. workers and businesses, cuts some red tape and creates a position in the Office of Management and Budget responsible for enforcing the directive.

What is Alpha Global Union?

Google employees from across the globe are forming a union alliance, weeks after more than 200 workers at the search engine giant and other units of parent company Alphabet Inc formed a labour union for US and Canadian offices.



UK launched Global Platform to track new COVID-19 variants

The government of the United Kingdom has stated that it will offer its world-leading genomics expertise to keep track of the emergence of the new Covid-19 variants to countries that lack scientific resources, according to an official release. The Health Secretary of the UK will soon outline his vision for a stronger, more collaborative, and effective global health system, not just in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic, but also to ensure the international community is better prepared for future threats, the statement said.

'Vaccine Maitri Initiative' extended to Sri Lanka

New Delhi: A consignment containing 500,000 doses of COVISHIELD vaccines manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) will reach Colombo on Thursday as India's gift as part of neighbourhood first policy.



Indo-French Ecological Partnership

NEW DELHI: Eyeing to widen cooperation in the fight against climate change Minister for Ecological Transition of France, Barbara Pompili, will be in India on a five-day visit to deepen Indo-French cooperation on sustainable development, particularly renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, smart cities, and plastic waste management. Minister Pompili will thus hold discussions with Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, focusing on climate challenges.

Japan Solution for Space Debris

A Japanese company and Kyoto University have joined forces to develop what they hope will be the world's first satellites made out of wood by 2023. Sumitomo Forestry said it has started research on tree growth and the use of wood materials in space. The partnership will begin experimenting with different types of wood in extreme environments on Earth. Space junk is becoming an increasing problem as more satellites are launched into the atmosphere.

Where is Jack Ma? Reasons of Disappearance

As a thousand maternal puns bloom in India after the western media realised that Chinese business magnate Jack Ma has been missing since November 2020, a sigh of relief has broken out among India's business class — none has gone missing because none lives in China.



