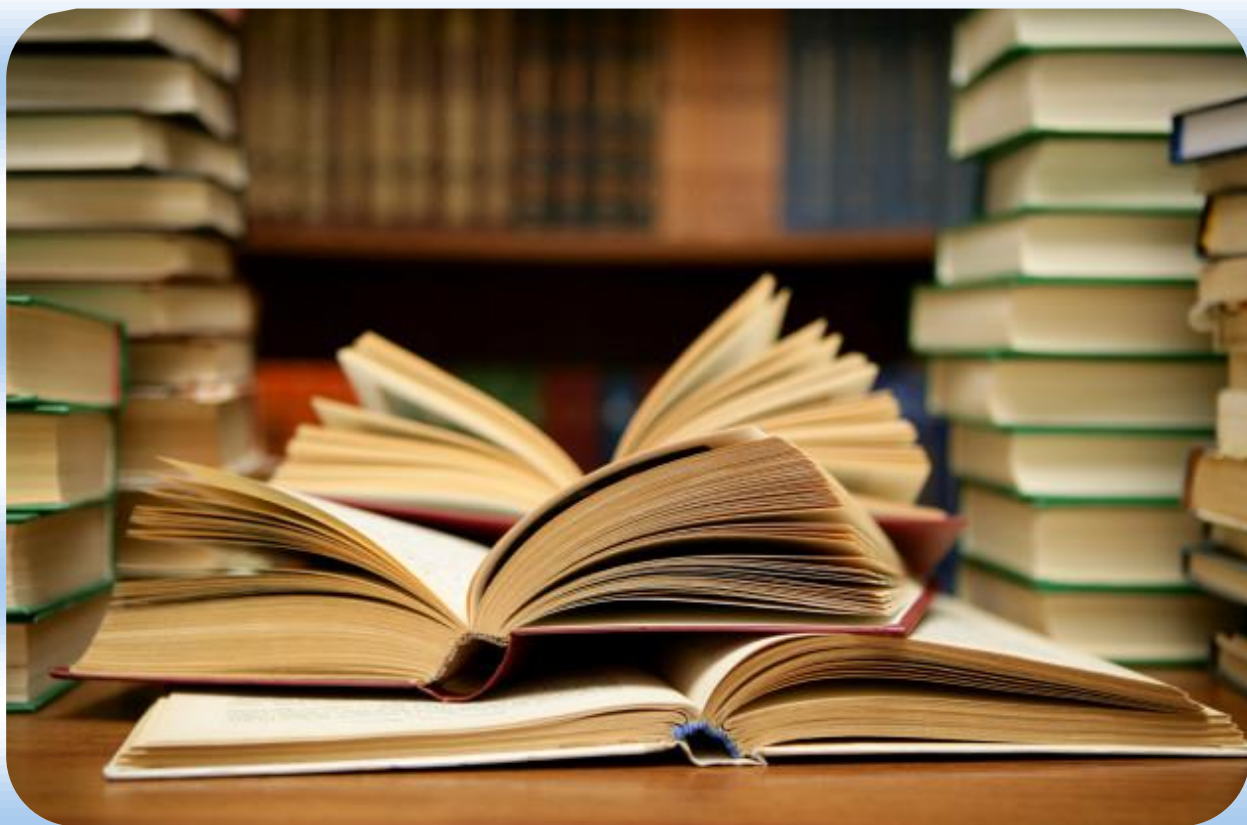


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



JUNE-2021

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Mastercard-Instamojo tie up to assist MSMEs, Gig workers

Mastercard has announced a strategic equity investment in Instamojo. This investment is aimed at empowering millions of MSMEs and gig workers by providing easy to use solutions that will help them to digitize and help setting up online stores, equip with digital payment acceptance capabilities and reach out to customers, even during the pandemic. Instamojo is a platform that offers small and micro merchants a virtual platform upon which they can quickly set up an e-commerce business and accept digital payments, following an easy onboarding process.

Govt to link e-courts with land records

The Centre is planning to link e-court with land records and registration base to help bonafide buyers know if the land is under any legal dispute. So far, the pilot project on linking of eCourt with land records and registration database has been completed in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana. As per the Centre, the eCourt- land record linking will reduce dubious transactions, help in dispute containment and also reduce clogging of the court's system.

P. Sainath awarded 2021 Fukuoka Prize

New Delhi: Renowned journalist P. Sainath was the recipients of the Fukuoka Grand Prize 2021, one of Japan's top awards open to people from all Asian countries for "investigate[ing] impoverished farming villages in India, listen[ing] to voices from the rural population". The Fukuoka Prize has three categories, Academic Prize, Culture Prize and the Grand Prize. Sainath was the recipient of the Grand Prize.

Russia begins construction of 5th Nuclear Power Unit at Kudankulam

Construction of the Unit 5 of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KNPP) began on Tuesday with a formal ceremony to mark the first concrete pouring into the foundation plate of the reactor building.



SEBI amends norms for Independent Directors

Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday approved a slew of measures, including amendments to norms related to independent directors and the introduction of a framework for accredited investors. Among other proposals, the watchdog has decided to allow resident Indian fund managers to be constituents of foreign portfolio investors and also amend mutual funds rules to provide for the investment of a minimum amount as “skin in the game” in the schemes by asset management companies (AMCs) based on the risk associated with such schemes.

Moderna: India licenses fourth Covid vaccine

India on Tuesday approved a fourth Covid-19 vaccine, and its first mRNA vaccine, Moderna’s mRNA-1273, thereby clearing the path for importing foreign regulator-approved Covid vaccines to India without bridging clinical studies. Moderna vaccine which has 94.1 percent efficacy will be available here through its Indian partner Cipla. US vaccine makers Pfizer and Moderna had sought indemnity against serious adverse events following vaccination, an immunity they enjoy in other countries where they supply.

Aadhaar can be ID proof for GRE, TOEFL

Indian students writing the GRE or TOEFL examinations will be allowed to use their Aadhaar cards as identification proof from July 1. Making the announcement, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) said on Tuesday that many students have faced difficulties in getting passports due to the COVID-19 lockdowns. The ETS conducts both the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

India cuts Crude Palm Oil Import Tax

The government on Tuesday reduced basic customs duty on crude palm oil to 10 per cent, which will help bring down the edible oil prices in the retail market. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in a notification cut the basic customs duty on crude palm oil to 10 per cent and refined palm oil to 37.5 per cent with effect from Wednesday. The effective duty, which includes cess and other charges, on crude palm oil will be 30.25 per cent, while for refined palm oil it would be 41.25 per cent from Wednesday.

India ranks 10th in Cybersecurity Index

India has made it to the top 10 in Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2020 by ITU, moving up 37 places to rank as the tenth best country in the world on key cybersafety parameters. The affirmation by the UN body of India’s efforts on cybersecurity, comes just ahead of the sixth anniversary of Digital India on July 1. India is emerging as a global IT superpower, asserting its digital sovereignty with firm measures to safeguard data privacy and online rights of citizens.

India to provide CoWIN technology to other countries

India will share the development story of Co-WIN, the digital platform that helped it launch and implement a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination programme, with more than 20 countries that have shown interest in adopting the portal to run their own inoculation drives.



Twitter- Razorpay tie up for Tip Jar feature

Microblogging platform Twitter on Thursday said it has added an Indian payment gateway Razorpay for its Tip Jar feature that allows users to send and receive money.



RIL launches New Clean Energy Business

Reliance Industries' Chairman Mukesh Ambani today put forward a three-fold strategy and roadmap for implementing "The global New Energy agenda needs to move from dialogue to action, from commitment to urgent implementation on the ground. It is not enough to be carbon neutral; the world needs to achieve absolute reductions in emissions soon". Ambani said in the company's 44th annual general meeting.

PM Modi asks to focus on 'toyconomy'

Calling on people to be "vocal for local toys", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said about 80 per cent of the toys were being imported by India with crores of rupees going abroad and asserted that it was very important to change this situation. Noting that India's share is only about 1.5 billion dollars (over Rs 11,000 crore) in the global toy market of approximately \$100 billion (Rs 7.5 trillion), Modi pitched for improving the country's standing in what he called 'Toyconomy' or the economic aspects of the toys and gaming industry.

West Bengal approves Student Credit Card scheme

"Moreover, the scheme will benefit all students residing in West Bengal who are enrolled in Higher Educational Institutions & Competitive Examinations Coaching Centres. GoWB is working relentlessly to achieve all the promises of my 10 Ongikars," she said. The credit card scheme was approved by the West Bengal Cabinet on Tuesday. The Cabinet gave its nod to the Student Credit Card scheme. Anyone who has spent 10 years in West Bengal can avail the benefits of it.

BIS: India's bank credit-to-GDP ratio grows 56% in 2020

Notwithstanding incremental credit growth plunging to a 59-year low at 5.56 per cent in FY21, the bank credit-to-GDP ratio rose to a five-year high of a little over 56 per cent in 2020, but way behind its peers and just half of the G20 average, according to the latest data from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS). At 56.075 per cent credit-to-GDP ratio, total outstanding bank credit stood at USD 1.52 trillion in the country in 2020.

Japan to help India build Vaccine Cold Chain Facilities

NEW DELHI: Japan will provide India a \$10 million assistance to build cold chain facilities for safe storage of vaccines, a statement from the Japanese embassy said on Friday. "This assistance will provide India with cold chain equipment including medical equipment such as cold-storage facilities, as 'Last One Mile Support' to ensure vaccination in each country, through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)," the statement said.

IIT Delhi develops Rapid Antigen Test Kit for COVID-19

The Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT-D) on Friday launched an affordable rapid antigen test kit to detect Covid-19 priced at ₹50, which was developed entirely by its Centre for Biomedical Engineering (CBME) led by professor Harpal Singh. The kit was launched by minister of state for education Sanjay Dhotre, who said the premier institute's efforts have helped the country in becoming more "self-sufficient" in its fight against the deadly virus.

Goa: First Rabies-free state

Goa has not reported a single rabies case in the last three years, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Wednesday, making Goa the first rabies-free state in the country. "We have now achieved 5,40,593 vaccinations against the rabies in dogs and educated nearly a lakh people in dog bite prevention across Goa as well as set up 24-hours rabies surveillance involving an emergency hotline and rapid response team for dog bite victims," the Chief Minister told reporters after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. "We are happy to say that in the last three years, we have not had a single case of rabies in Goa," Sawant said.

Indian Private players allowed to build and operate rocket launch sites

India has decided to allow private companies to establish and operate rocket launch sites within and outside the country, subject to prior authorisation from the government. Similarly, any rocket launch (orbital or sub-orbital) from Indian or overseas territory can be carried out only with authorisation from Indian National Space Promotion & Authorization Center (IN-SPACe), an independent body constituted by the Government of India, under the Department of Space (DOS).



Taj named strongest hotel brand in the world

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), South Asia's largest hospitality company, announced that its iconic brand, Taj, has been rated the Strongest Hotel Brand in the World by Brand Finance, the world's leading brand valuation consultancy in its annual 'Hotels 50 2021' report.



Amazon Web Services acquires encrypted messaging app Wickr

Amazon has acquired an encrypted messaging app Wickr founded in 2012. The terms of the deal were not disclosed. Wickr's app -- like secure messaging competitor Signal -- has been popular with journalists and whistleblowers; it's also been a go-to for criminals, the Verge reported. It's unclear if the proximity to the tech monolith will impact the app's popularity for free users.



SEBI- Franklin Templeton case

Reacting to the adjudication order by Sebi penalising the top management in the Franklin Templeton case, the fund house has said that the 'disagree' with the findings in the SEBI order. Franklin spokesperson said that the fund house intends to file an appeal with the Hon'ble Securities Appellate Tribunal. "At Franklin Templeton, we place great emphasis on compliance, and have policies in place to cover a variety of matters consistent with applicable regulations and global best practices.

Finance Minister announces Stimulus Package

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday announced some fresh relief measures for the economy, the first such package after the second COVID-19 wave, focusing largely on extending loan guarantees and concessional credit for pandemic-hit sectors and investments to ramp up healthcare capacities. The government pegged the total financial implications of the package, which included the reiteration of some steps that were already announced such as the provision of food grains to the poor till November and higher fertiliser subsidies, at ₹6,28,993 crore.

Twitter appoints interim Chief Compliance Officer for India

Twitter on Tuesday said it has appointed an interim Chief Compliance Officer and the details of the official will be shared directly with the IT Ministry soon. The move came after the government had given one last chance to Twitter to comply with the new IT rules, as the microblogging platform had not made immediate appointments of key personnel, mandated under the new guidelines that came into effect on May 26.



Google Pay expands Cards Tokenization

Digital wallet platform Google Pay today said that it has expanded its network of bank partners offering cards tokenisation on the Google Pay app and added lenders including SBI, IndusInd Bank, Federal Bank, and HSBC India. In a statement, the online payment system said, "After successfully rolling out tokenisation with Kotak Mahindra Bank, SBI Cards, and Axis Bank, Google Pay has now added debit cards by SBI, IndusInd Bank, and Federal Bank and credit cards by IndusInd Bank and HSBC India to its slate."

All India Survey on Higher Education 2019-2020

The Ministry of Education on Thursday released the All Indian Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) report 2019-20. The report revealed that the number of Institutes of National Importance (INIs) have increased from 75 in 2015 to 135 in 2020. The number of PhDs has also increased by 60 per cent in the last five years.



ATM cash withdrawal rule changed

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday announced some changes in automated teller machine (ATM) cash withdrawal rules. These ATM cash withdrawal rule changes include higher charges on transactions beyond free permissible limit, new free ATM transaction limit and rise in interchange fee.



Mandatory Hallmarking of Gold Jewellery

The government is all set to implement mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery and artefacts from tomorrow, 15 June 2021. Earlier the deadline was 1 June which was extended by a fortnight in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to a report in PTI, a committee, headed by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Director-General Pramod Tewari, has been formed to ensure proper coordination and resolve the implementation issues.



India Post to release a 'Special Cancellation'

India Post will put a special cancellation marking on all mail booked on June 21 to commemorate seventh International Day of Yoga, announced the AYUSH ministry on Saturday. The special cancellation will be issued with a pictorial design through 810 head post offices across India in one of the largest philatelic commemorations ever, the ministry added.



Veteran Athlete Milkha Singh passes away

Milkha Singh death reactions updates: Iconic sprinter Milkha Singh was cremated with full state honours on Saturday in Chandigarh, marking the end of an era in which his pioneering accomplishments on the track galvanised a newly-independent India. Milkha, who was 91, was bid a tearful adieu in the presence of his family members and several dignitaries, including sports minister Kiren Rijiju. 'The Flying Sikh', as he was fondly called, died on Friday night due to COVID-19 related complications.



IIT Madras launches 'Centre for Research on Start-Ups and Risk Financing'

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras launched a 'centre for research on start-ups and risk financing' (CREST) to provide academic and thought leadership in innovation, entrepreneurship and risk capital. It would also create a data repository on Indian start-ups and ventures to address a major hurdle for engaging in high-quality research. This information resource would be made accessible for researchers and policymakers that can result in top-tier publications.

Jamsetji Tata: World's top philanthropist of last century

With total donations of \$102.4 billion, India's Jamsetji Tata has topped the 2021 Edelgive Hurun philanthropists of the century. The list is a ranking of the world's most generous individuals from the past century and this is the first year of the ranking. Tata started his endowment journey in the year 1892.



CRISIL cuts India's GDP forecast to 9.5% from 11%

MUMBAI : Domestic credit ratings agency Crisil on Monday cut its FY22 growth estimate for India to 9.5% from the earlier 11% due to the hit to private consumption and investments following the second wave of Covid-19.



Weyan: 1st Village to Vaccinate 100% Adult Population

A remote hamlet in Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir has become the first village in India to vaccinate all its adult population against COVID-19, officials said on Tuesday. The credit goes to the healthcare workers whose strenuous efforts shot Weyan hamlet, with an adult population of 362, to national fame, they said.



INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Saudi to launch a Second National Airline

CAIRO: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced plans on Tuesday to launch a second national airline as part of a broader strategy to turn the kingdom into a global logistics hub as it seeks to diversify from oil. The creation of another flag carrier would catapult Saudi Arabia into the 5th rank globally in terms of air transit traffic.



Warren Buffett exits from the Gates Foundation

Warren Buffett, the chairman and chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway, said on Wednesday that he had resigned as a trustee of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, coming just weeks after the couple announced their divorce and raising new questions about the future of the foundation.



China to run First Electric Train in Tibet

China is all set to operationalise the first electric train in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet, connecting the provincial capital Lhasa with Nyingchi — a strategically located Tibetan border town close to Arunachal Pradesh.



China plans First Manned MARS Mission in 2033

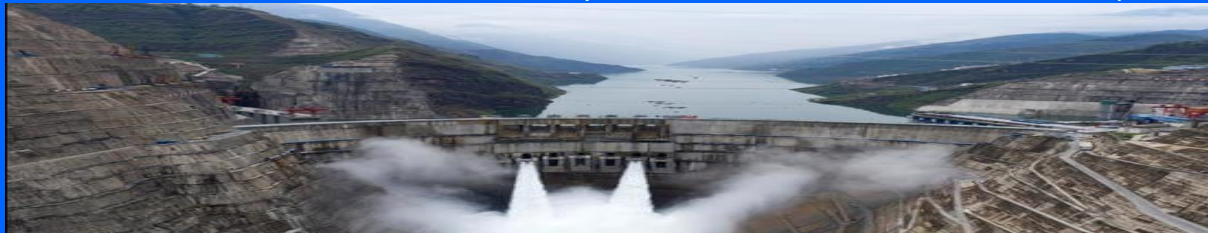
China intends to send a crewed mission to Mars by 2033, setting a clear timeline in Beijing's ambitious effort to take on Washington as a superpower in space. Beijing wants to send astronauts to the red planet over five missions running from 2033 to 2043, Wang Xiaojun, head of China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, one of the country's state-run aerospace companies, said in remarks published by Chinese state media.

UK bans World's Largest Crypto Exchange

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has ruled that the firm cannot conduct any "regulated activity" in the UK. It also advised people to be wary of adverts promising high returns on cryptoasset investments. Binance said the FCA notice would have no "direct impact" on the services it provides from its website Binance.com. Binance's existing crypto exchange is not UK-based so despite the FCA ruling, there will be no impact on UK residents who use the website to purchase and sell cryptocurrencies.

China starts Baihetan Hydro Project

Two units of the giant Baihetan hydropower plant, said to be the largest one under construction globally, on the Yangtze river in southwest China generated electricity for the first time on Monday, state media reported.



El Salvador: First country to formally adopt bitcoin as legal tender

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele said the nation has adopted Bitcoin as legal tender, a step he believes will create jobs and promote financial inclusion. Bukele, Latin America's youngest president who's known to break from the norms, said on Twitter lawmakers approved the legislation by a "supermajority."



U.S. passes bill to address China Tech Threat

The proposed measures come in the face of growing international competition, particularly from China. A Beijing official hit back at the bill on Wednesday, saying it "exaggerated the 'China threat'". The bill, which must pass the House of Representatives before being signed into law, is a rare point of agreement between Republicans and Democrats.



China Passes Law against Foreign Sanctions

China has passed a law to counter foreign sanctions, as it strives to diffuse pressure from the United States and the European Union over trade, technology, Hong Kong and Xinjiang. China's top legislature, the National People's Congress standing committee (NPC) passed the law on Thursday, according to state television CCTV. But details of its contents have not yet been released.



Google to build longest Undersea Cable in the World

Google on Wednesday said it is building an open subsea cable that will connect the East Coast of the US and Las Toninas, Argentina with additional landings in Brazil and Uruguay. With the new cable, the tech giant aims to bolster internet connectivity to users in South America and enhance its existing cable investments in the region.



Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, UAE Elected to UNSC

United Nations: Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates were elected unopposed to the powerful UN Security Council on Friday as non-permanent members for the 2022-23 term.



Rebecca Grynspan: 1st woman to head UNCTAD

The UN General Assembly on June 12 approved the nomination of Costa Rican economist Rebecca Grynspan to head the UN agency promoting trade and development, the first woman and Central American to lead the Geneva-based organisation.



Pulitzer Prize 2021

The 2021 Pulitzer Prizes, journalism's highest honor, were announced Friday after a historic year shaped by a nationwide racial justice reckoning, a polarizing presidential election and a devastating global pandemic. One big contender for a Pulitzer this year was The New York Times' investigation of the income tax information former President Donald Trump kept from the public called "The President's Taxes," written by Scripps Howard Award.

New Zealand to launch World's First Wooden Satellite

The European Space Agency (ESA) has planned to put the world's first wooden satellite, WISA Woodsat, on Earth's orbit by the end of this year. The mission of the satellite is to test the applicability of wooden materials like plywood in spacecraft structures.



NATO declares China a Global Security Challenge

BRUSSELS: NATO leaders on Monday declared that China poses a constant security challenge and is working to undermine global order, and they said they're worried about how fast the Chinese are developing nuclear missiles.



Sustainable Development Report 2021

New York, 14 June 2021 - Today, the Sustainable Development Report (SDR), including the SDG Index and Dashboards to track progress on the Global Goals for 2030, was released. For the first time since Heads of State of all 193 UN member countries agreed on these universal goals at a historic summit in 2015, the annual report shows a reversal in progress. The report was written by a group of authors led by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, President of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).

Boundary Between Solar System and Interstellar Space Mapped

Astronomers at Los Alamos National Laboratory in the United States have developed the first 3D map of the heliosphere. The heliosphere is a protective bubble created by the solar wind - a constant stream of magnetic field and particles released by the sun - around our solar system that protects us from harmful interstellar radiation.



What is Juneteenth in US?

This week, President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, which establishes a holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in the US. "I've only been president for several months, but I think this will go down, for me, as one of the greatest honours I will have had as president," Mr Biden said at the signing event on Thursday. So what is Juneteenth, how did it become a holiday and what do people do to celebrate it?

Japan to issue COVID-19 Vaccine Passport

Japan said on Thursday it will make a vaccine passport available from next month for Japanese travellers, as governments around the world experiment with ways to relaunch tourism and business trips. "We are preparing to issue a certificate of vaccination for those who need one... when they visit foreign countries," top government spokesman Katsunobu Kato told reporters.

Laurel Hubbard: 1st Trans Olympian

New Zealand's Laurel Hubbard has become the first ever transgender athlete picked to compete at an Olympics, in a controversial decision.



Japan to allow 10,000 local fans at Olympics

The Tokyo Olympics will allow some local fans to attend when the games open in just over a month, organizing committee officials and the IOC said on Monday. Organizers set a limit of 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 10,000 fans for all Olympic venues.



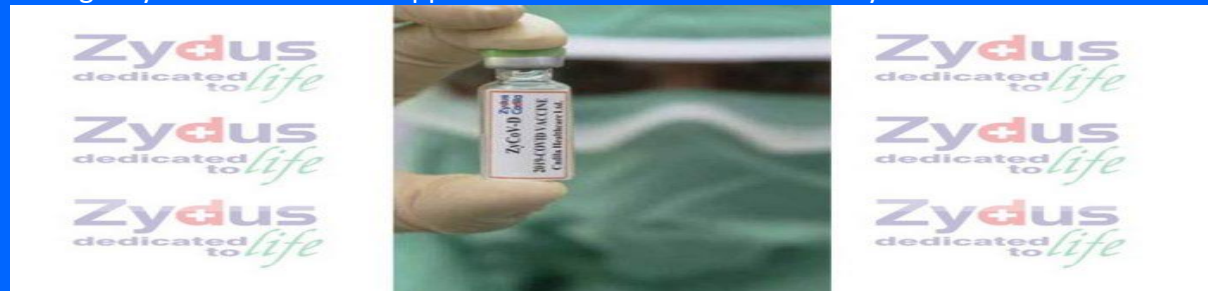
Israel successfully tests airborne high-power Laser

Jerusalem: The Israeli military said Monday it has successfully tested an airborne high-power laser that can shoot down drones, technology it hopes to deploy on a larger scale in the coming years.



ZyCoV-D: World's first DNA-based Vaccine

New Delhi: ZyCoV-D, the DNA vaccine against Covid-19 developed by Gujarat-based company Zydus Cadila, could be on its way to becoming the first approved DNA Covid vaccine in the world. The company has told the Government of India that it would be ready with an emergency use authorisation application within the next 10-12 days.



World Employment and Social Outlook 2021

GENEVA : At least 220 million people are expected to remain unemployed globally this year, well above pre-pandemic levels, with a weak labour market recovery exacerbating existing inequalities, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said on Wednesday.



Russia formally exits from Open Skies pact

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law on Monday that formalises Russia's exit from the Open Skies arms control treaty, a pact that allows unarmed surveillance flights over member countries. Russia had hoped that Putin and his United States counterpart Joe Biden could discuss the treaty when they meet later this month at a summit in Geneva.



