INTERNATIONAL

GoAir announces expansion of services to United Arab Emirates
- Budget carrier GoAir on Thursday announced expansion of its services to the UAE with launch of new flights to Sharjah from Mumbai, Delhi, Kochi and Kannur.
- Currently, flights to the UAE are operated under an Air Bubble Agreement since international commercial flights to and from India remain suspended from March 23 in the wake of the C-19 pandemic.

INDIAN AIR FORCE LAUNCHES E-GOVERNANCE (E-OFFICE) PAN IAF
- The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria PVSM AVSM VM ADC formally launched the IAF e-Governance (e-Office) portal at Air HQ, Vayu Bhavan on 31 Dec 20. The implementation undertaken as part of Digital India and e-governance initiative will transition the entire Indian Air Force to a ‘paperless office’ workflow.
- The launch of e-Governance in IAF marks a paradigm shift from the current method of correspondence, filing and documentation to a digital one. The platform would achieve enhanced transparency, improved efficiency, increased accountability, assured data integrity and rapidly accessible archives along with a major reduction in the use of paper.

Agriculture Ministry inaugurates virtual Agri-hackathon Atmanirbhar Krishi
- Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers’ Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar inaugurated the Virtual Agri-hackathon 2020 organised by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation and Farmers’ Welfare in association with IARI, Pusa, New Delhi.
- Speaking on the occasion, Narendra Singh Tomar said that Agri India Hackathon is the largest virtual gathering to create dialogues and accelerate innovations.

Odisha govt plans memorial for 'martyrs' C-19 warriors
- Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday announced plans to build a memorial in the State Capital for the C-19 warriors who laid their lives in the line of duty.
- The Chief Minister made this announcement during a discussion with family members of martyred C-19 warriors of five districts through video conference. Expressing his gratitude to the family members of martyred warriors, Naveen said names of those who lost their lives will be inscribed in the memorial to keep their memory live.

India exports first shipment of moringa powder to US
- India has started exports of Moringa powder, keeping in mind its rising global demand and nutritional properties, the commerce ministry said on Thursday.
"Two tonne of organic certified Moringa powder were sent to the US through air consignment on December 29.

Delhi’s air quality in December best in 4 years: CPCB
- Pollution levels in Delhi this December were the lowest in the last four years, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- The average air quality index (AQI) for December stood at 308. It was 337 last year, 360 in 2018 and 316 in 2017, the CPCB data showed.
- The capital recorded four "severe" air quality days this December as compared to eight each in 2019 and 2018 and one in 2017.
- There were 10 "poor" air days this December as against seven, four and nine in 2019, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS
Shri Suneet Sharma takes over the charge of new Chairman & CEO of Railway Board
- Shri Suneet Sharma, has taken over the charge of new Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) and ex-officio Principal Secretary to Government of India. The appointments committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Shri Suneet Sharma as Chairman & CEO of Railway Board. Prior to this, Shri Suneet Sharma worked as General Manager, Eastern Railway.
- Shri Suneet Sharma joined the Indian Railways in 1979 as a Special Class Apprentice while he was studying engineering at IIT Kanpur. A graduate in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering he has more than 40 years of experience serving in the Indian Railways in various capacities.

BANKING AND ECONOMY
Canara Bank Raises Rs 1,635 Crore Via Bonds
- State-owned Canara Bank on Thursday said it has raised Rs 1,635 crore through bonds, to fund business growth.
- The capital was raised by issuing additional tier-1 bonds at 8.50 per cent coupon on December 31, the bank said in a statement.
- The fund raise will help the bank boost its capital adequacy ratio.

Jubilant FoodWorks to buy 10% stake in Barbeque Nation
- Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd will invest ₹92 crore to buy a 10.76% stake in Barbeque Nation Hospitality Ltd (BNHL), which runs the popular Barbeque Nation (BBQ) chain of restaurants.
- “The company will acquire 36,50,794 fully paid-up equity shares of face value of ₹5 each aggregating to 10.76% stake in BNHL,” Jubilant FoodWorks, which operates the Domino’s Pizza chain and the Dunkin’ Donuts coffee and doughnut chain in India, said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. The all-cash deal is expected to conclude by 25 January.

RBI to conduct simultaneous sale-purchase of govt securities on Jan 7
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct simultaneous purchase and sale of government
securities under open market operations (OMOs) for Rs 10,000 crore each on January 7.

- The decision was taken after a review of current liquidity and financial conditions, the RBI said in a statement.
- Eligible participants should submit their bids in electronic format on RBI's core banking solution (E-Kuber) system between 10 and 11 am on January 7.

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INTERNATIONAL

Amazon acquires podcast network Wondery
- Amazon recently announced that it’s acquiring Wondery, one of the last major independent podcast networks that having podcasts including “Dirty John,” “Dr. Death,” “Business Wars,” and “The Shrink Next Door.”
- The acquisition is a neat one because it sets Amazon up to better compete against Spotify, making a series of acquisitions, including podcast network Gimlet. With this acquisition, Wondery will become part of Amazon Music, which launched podcast support in September this year. “Amazon Music launched podcasts in September 2020, and together with Wondery, we hope to accelerate the growth and evolution of podcasts by bringing creators, hosts, and immersive experiences to even more listeners across the globe, just as we do with music.

NATIONAL

Cabinet nod to transport hub at Greater Noida
- The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the construction of a multi-modal logistics and transport hub in Uttar Pradesh’s Greater Noida at an estimated cost of Rs3,883.80 crore.
- “The multi-modal logistics hub project will be developed as a world-class facility that will provide efficient storage/transit of goods to/from the Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC) and offer a one-stop destination to freight companies and customers,” an official statement said. It will provide standard container handling activities and value-added services to reduce logistics costs with improved efficiency of operations, the statement added.

Railways launch upgraded IRCTC website
- Union railways minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday launched the revamped version of the e-ticketing website of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).
- The new website claims to have complete user personalization linked to the user login, such as the booking of meals, retiring rooms and hotels too have been integrated and can be directly booked along with the tickets.

Government Extends Deadline For FASTag Till February 15, 2021
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highway (MoRTH) has extended the deadline for the collection of toll charges on the National Highways using FASTag. The deadline was originally until January 1, 2021 which has now been extended to February 15, 2021.
• Under the original deadline, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) was slated to completely switch over to FASTag payment at toll plazas from January 1 onwards, which meant FASTags needed to be retrofitted on all four-wheelers and commercial vehicles.

India’s 1st Testbed TiHAN launched at IIT Hyderabad
• Union Minister of Education, Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ has virtually laid the foundation stone of “TiHAN-IIT Hyderabad”, India’s first Testbed for Autonomous Navigation Systems (Terrestrial and Aerial) at IIT Hyderabad. The Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation Systems (TiHAN) for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Remotely Operated Vehicles at IIT Hyderabad.
• The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has sanctioned Rs. 135 crores to IIT Hyderabad under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) to set up a Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation and Data Acquisition Systems.
• Two acres of land has already been allocated in the IIT Hyderabad campus and the facilities are planned in phases.
• All Smart poles are enabled with communication providing technology with some Poles designed with sprinklers to simulate rain scenarios. The developed testbed will be available for use by all the industries, R&D labs, academia conducting research and development in the broad areas of autonomous navigation.

India’s first pollinator park opens in Uttarakhand
• The country’s first pollinator park with over 40 species of butterflies, honeybees, birds and insects has been developed over four acres at Haldwani, Uttarakhand. The objective behind developing the park is to conserve various pollinator species, create awareness among people in general about the importance of conservation of these species and to promote further research on various aspects of pollination, including a threat to habitat and impact of pollution on pollinators.
• There are at present 40 species of pollinators at the park, including common jezebel, common emigrant, red pierrot, common sailor, plain tiger, the common leopard, the common moron, common grass yellow, common blue bottle, common four-ring, peacock pansy, the painted lady, pioneer white, yellow-orange tip and lime butterfly.
• Pollinators provide pollination services to over 180,000 different plant species. Without them, existing populations of plants would decline, even if soil, air, nutrients, and other life-sustaining elements were available.
• The importance of pollinators was recognised long back in the west and to conserve pollinators, parks, gardens, strips and pathways were created on a large scale in countries like the USA.

SPORTS

Lewis Hamilton knighted in UK honours list
• Lewis Hamilton has been knighted in Britain’s traditional New Year Honours list after equalling Michael Schumacher’s record of seven Formula One world titles.
The list recognises outstanding achievements in various fields including showbusiness, sport and politics, as well as the contributions of a larger number of everyday citizens.

There are many awards this year for those seeking solutions to the problems posed by coronavirus as the pandemic drags on.

Hamilton, 35, surpassed Schumacher’s record number of career race wins during a stellar season in 2020 that was shortened due to the coronavirus pandemic.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Navy, DRDO conduct maiden trial of air dropped container ‘SAHAYAK-NG’

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) along with the Indian Navy conducted the successful maiden test trial of ‘SAHAYAK-NG’ India’s first indigenously designed and developed Air Dropped Container from IL 38SD aircraft (Indian Navy) off the coast of Goa. The trial was conducted by the Indian Navy to enhance its operational logistics capabilities and provide critical engineering stores to ships that are deployed more than 2000 kilometres from the coast.
- SAHAYAK-NG is an advanced version of SAHAYAK Mk I.
- The newly developed GPS aided air dropped container is having the capability to carry a payload that weighs up to 50 kilograms and can be dropped from heavy aircraft.
- Two DRDO laboratories, Naval Science and Technological Laboratory, Visakhapatnam and Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment, Agra were involved in the development of the SAHAYAK-NG container along with the industry partner M/s Avantel for GPS integration.

**OBITUARY**

Veteran broadcaster Indira Joseph Venniyoor passes away

- Veteran broadcaster, Indira Joseph Venniyoor passed away. She was a renowned broadcaster, All India Radio veteran & first English news announcer of Travancore Radio when its English service began in 1949.
- She was the wife of well-known literary scholar & art critic the late E.M.J. Venniyoor.

**AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

Indian Army Chief MM Naravane receives Guard of Honour at ROK Army Headquarters

- Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane has received a Guard of Honour at Republic of Korea Army Headquarters at Gyeryong.
- He called on General Nam Yeong shin, Chief of Staff of Korean Army and discussed issues of bilateral defence cooperation. The Army chief visited the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) near the border with North Korea. General Naravane visited the 30th Armoured Brigade and DMZ. During his three day visit, he met senior military and civilian leadership of the Republic of Korea and discussed avenues for enhancing defence relations between the two countries.

Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice 2020

- Harmony Foundation hosted the Mother Teresa Memorial Awards for Social Justice. The Awards in its 16th year is the only award endorsed by Sister Prema, the Superior General of the
Missionaries of Charity, the organization started by Mother Teresa. The theme for this year’s awards was, ‘Celebrating Compassion In Times Of C-19’.

- Dr Anthony Fauci (USA) is the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, USA. He and his task force were among the first ones to realize the seriousness of this pandemic.
- Father Fabio Stevenazzi (Milan, Italy), decided to return to medical practice in order to help those infected with C-19 has thrust him to be the modern-day example of St Charles Borromeo who in 1576 during the Great Plague that hit the city of Milan and cut the population by half, stayed behind to nurse the sick and renovate hospitals.
- Dr Pradeep Kumar (Chennai) took it upon himself to give a befitting burial to his colleague with the help of two ward boys, at a cemetery in the city in the middle of the night.
- IPS Sanjay Pandey (DG Home Guards, Maharashtra) went beyond the call of duty as a police officer to open the first relief camp in the Mumbai city suburbs for migrant workers whose livelihood were disrupted by the lockdown to contain the pandemic.
- Vikas Khanna (Manhattan, USA) heart still moves to serve the lonely and underprivileged here in India.
- KK Shailaja (Minister of Health, Kerala), her extraordinary efforts and pro-activeness in dealing with the pandemic by following experts and scientific advice helped countless Keralites survive the terrors of this pandemic, serving as an example for governments of other states countries to follow.

Pt Satish Vyas conferred Tansen Samman at the World Music Festival
- In Madhya Pradesh, 96th Tansen Music Festival began in Gwalior with strict C-19 guidelines in place. In the inaugural ceremony renowned santoor player, Pandit Satish Vyas was conferred upon the prestigious Tansen Samman.
- Bhopal-based institution Abhinav Kala Parishad was honoured with Raja Mansingh Tomar award. The festival pays tribute to Tansen, one of 9 gems in Akbar’s court.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Harsh Vardhan nominated to the Board of ‘GAVI’, The Vaccine Alliance
- Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has been nominated as the board member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI). The seat is currently held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar. Dr Vardhan will represent the South East Area Regional Office (SEARO)/ Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board. Dr Vardhan will assume the charge with effect from January 1, 2021, and serve till December 31, 2023.
- The vaccine alliance GAVI is an international organization, that provides a forum for balanced strategic decision-making, innovation and partner collaboration.
- It was created to improve access to new and underused vaccines for numerous vaccine-preventable diseases for children who live in the world’s poorest countries.
- The GAVI board is responsible for the strategic direction and policy-making oversees the
operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.

Harsh Vardhan inaugurates India’s highest meteorological centre at Leh
- Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the meteorological centre (MC) of the India Meteorological Department at Leh in Ladakh via video conferencing. The centre would provide localised weather forecasts in the region, which would result in strengthening the weather-related early warning system for the region.
- The meteorological centre at Leh is the second MC located in the Himalayas. The first such facility is based in Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The facility is located at a height of 3,500 metres, which makes it the highest meteorological centre in India.
- This new MC will provide short-range (three days), medium-range (12 days) and long-range (one month) forecast for Leh and Kargil districts of the Union Territory.

Nitin Gadkari announces Multi-Model Logistics Park in Assam’s Silchar
- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari has announced that a multi-modal logistics park in Assam. It will be constructed in Silchar and the Balacherra-Harengajao section of the Silchar-Saurashtra Highway will be completed in March 2022. Mr Gadkari made this announcement at a public meeting at Zero Point on the East-West Corridor at Madhurmukh at Rangpur.
- The Union Minister for Road Transport laid the foundation stone of 20 projects and inaugurated seven projects worth Rs 2,366 crores for Assam with a total length of 439 km.
- The logistics park will be constructed in Silchar and construction works of East-West Corridor would be expedited and two new bridges would come up over the Barak river.
- Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to send a proposal for ₹ 250 crore project in the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund for the Barak Valley.
- The water transport system of Brahmaputra would be strengthened, the Union Minister said that dredging work on Barak river has also been completed.

India’s 1st hot air balloon wildlife safari launched in Madhya Pradesh
- India’s first hot air balloon wildlife safari in a tiger reserve was launched in the world-famous Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve by Madhya Pradesh forest minister Vijay Shah. Now like Africa’s forests, tourists in India will also enjoy hot air balloon wildlife safari. The state was planning to introduce this service in Pench, Kanha and Panna tiger reserves as well.
- The activity will be restricted to the buffer area and people can watch tigers, leopards, Indian sloth bear and other wild animals from a height. It is the first in any tiger reserve in the country. The service is being operated by Jaipur-based Sky Waltz and company.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Cabinet approves export of indigenously-developed Akash Missile System
- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal to export indigenously-developed Akash Missile System. The Cabinet has also approved to set up of
a committee for faster approvals of exports. The export version of Akash will be different from System currently deployed with Indian Armed Forces.

- Akash is a short-range Surface to Air Missile with a range of 25 Kms to protect vulnerable areas and vulnerable points from air attacks. It was inducted in IAF in 2014 and in the Indian Army in 2015.

**AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

**V.K. Yadav chairman of railway board conferred with Eminent Engineer Award**

- The chairman & CEO of Railway Board, Vinod Kumar Yadav has been conferred with the prestigious “Eminent Engineer Award for the Year 2020’. This award is given by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) for his outstanding contribution towards modernization and reforms over Indian Railways.
- Every year Institution of Engineering and Technology, Delhi Local Network celebrates Engineers’ Day on the 15th of September to commemorate the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Sir M Visvesvaraya. On this occasion, besides technical activities, the Institution also presents the Eminent Engineer’s Award to distinguished Engineering personalities for their outstanding services in the field of Engineering and technology.
- The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) is a multidisciplinary professional engineering institution formally known as The Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE), established in 1871.
- It is one of the world’s largest engineering institutions with over 168,000 members in 150 countries. The Institution is celebrating glorious 150 years of existence.
- IET is registered as a Charity in England and Wales and Scotland. IET Delhi Local Network is one of nine such networks in South Asia, which constitutes the Indian arm of the IET.

**Hemant Kumar Pandey gets DRDO’s “Scientist of the Year” award**

- Senior scientist Hemant Kumar Pandey has been honoured with DRDO’s “Scientist of the Year Award” for his contribution in developing several herbal medicines, including the popular drug Lukoskin meant for the treatment of leucoderma. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had recently facilitated the scientist at an event here with the prestigious award that comprises a certificate and cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.
- The scientist has developed six herbal drugs so far, Lukoskin used for treating leucoderma or Vitiligo, a condition in which white patches get developed on the skin, has been most widely appreciated and found huge acceptance in the market.
- A recipient of several prestigious awards for his contribution in the field of herbal medicine, Pandey has been undertaking research at the Defence Research and Development Organisation”s (DRDO) lab Defence Institute of Bio-Energy Research (DIBER) at Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand for the past 25 years.
- Apart from Lukoskin, Pandey has developed drugs for the treatment of eczema and toothache as well as an anti-radiation cream, most of which are already being sold in the market following the transfer of technology (ToT).
Bihar wins Digital India award for transferring money in C-19 time

- The Chief Minister Secretariat of Bihar, the Disaster Management Department besides the National Informatics Centre (NIC) of the state have jointly been chosen as winners in the “pandemic category” Digital India Awards 2020. Bihar government’s initiative to transfer financial assistance directly to the accounts of beneficiaries during the C-19 pandemic has made its departments winners of the Digital India Awards, instituted by the central government, this year for innovative steps in e-governance.
- More than 21 lakh stranded workers outside Bihar were provided financial assistance through the “Bihar Sahayata Mobile App”. The Digital India Awards, instituted under the aegis of the National Portal of India, serve the purpose of bringing to the fore innovative digital solutions and thereby inspiring emulation by all government entities.

K. Veeramani honoured with Dr. Narendra Dabholkar Memorial Award

- The Dr Narendra Dabholkar Memorial Award for this year has been conferred upon Dravidar Kazhagam president K. Veeramani. The award was instituted in the memory of the Maharashtra-based rationalist Dabholkar.
- The U.S.-based Maharashtra Foundation had instituted the award in his memory, a release issued by the Dravidar Kazhagam. The award includes ₹1 lakh and a citation. Mr Veeramani has dedicated his whole life to propagate rationalism and served for the cause of social justice in society.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Late Justice Rajindar Sachar’s Autobiography: ‘In Pursuit of Justice’

- The family of Late Justice Rajindar Sachar in association with The Indian Society of International Law and The Indian Law Institute is organizing the book launch “In Pursuit Of Justice: An Autobiography” written by Late Justice Rajindar Sachar. The book has been posthumously published.
- Justice Rajindar Sachar was a socialist, an egalitarian, a defender of civil liberties, a deeply engaged citizen of India, and, above all, a humanist.
- A man who believed in standing for the last man in the line, he was ‘armed’ with a moral compass that never wavered.
- He joined the Delhi High Court in 1970 but was transferred out of Delhi for voicing his opposition to the Emergency.
- During those dark days, he shared a close bond with justice H.R. Khanna, the lone voice of dissent in a Supreme Court that chose to side with Indira Gandhi.
- Brought back to Delhi after the Emergency, he rose to become the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

ICICI Bank and Google Pay collaborate to bring digital registration of FASTag

- ICICI Bank has announced that it is collaborating with Google to issue FASTag. It has become the first bank to join hands with Google Pay for the issuance of FASTag. Customers will now be able
to order, track and recharge ICICI Bank FASTag via the Google Pay app. Currently, Google Pay users could recharge their FASTag on the app, but purchasing one directly from the Google app was not possible.

- The new partnership will now allow users to conveniently order, track, and recharge ICICI Bank FASTags from the app itself. The government has made January 1, 2021, as the new date for mandatorily adding FASTags to vehicles.
- The announcement makes ICICI Bank the first bank to join hands with Google Pay for the issuance of FASTag. This will also add competition for Paytm, which currently issues FASTags from the app as well and is quite a popular choice for many customers.
- The association gains prominence during the widespread pandemic as this allows any Google Pay user to order and receive FASTag in a seamless and contact-less manner.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Mumbai airport introduces express C-19 testing facility, gives results in 13 minutes
- The city’s Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Tuesday said it has introduced a new 24X7 C-19 testing facility, which gives test results in flat 13 minutes at a cost of ₹ 4,500.
- Since its launch on December 15, CSMIA has witnessed an average of 30-35 such tests per day, CSMIA said in a release.
- A total of 400 express tests have been carried out at the airport till December 28, which include passengers who had connecting flights to destinations outside Maharashtra.

Harsh Vardhan launches India’s 1st indigenous pneumonia vaccine ‘Pneumosil’
- The Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan launched India’s first indigenously developed vaccine against pneumonia. The Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) named ‘Pneumosil’ has been developed by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and PATH, an international, nonprofit global health organization based in Seattle.
- The vaccine will provide protection against 10 variants of pneumococcus bacteria that causes pneumonia, meningitis, ear, and blood infections in children. Pneumococcal disease is the largest contributor to under-five mortality rate worldwide.

INCOIS launches “Digital Ocean” app for information sharing
- The Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Science & Technology, Dr Harsh Vardhan virtually inaugurated the web-based application “Digital Ocean”. It has been developed by Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) an autonomous organization under M/o Earth sciences. Digital Ocean is a first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.
- Digital Ocean is a step towards Prime Minister’s vision of Digital India, to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
• Digital Ocean will serve as a one-stop-solution for all the data related to the ocean.
• It will help to share this knowledge about the ocean with a wide range of users including
research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, the academic community, maritime
industry and policymakers, as well as general public and the common man that too free of cost.

PM Modi flagged off India’s first driverless train on Delhi Metro
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off the country’s first-ever fully-automated driverless
train service on the Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro. Apart from this, PM also launched fully
operational National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) on the Airport Express Line of Delhi Metro,
to connect DMRC with the NCMC service.
• NCMC, also known as ‘One Nation One Card’, is an inter-operable transport card that allows the
holders all in one service to pay for their travel, toll taxes, parking charges, retail shopping and
even withdraw money.

SPORTS
BWF bans Russian badminton player Nikita Khakimov for 5 years
• The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has imposed a 5-year ban on Russian shuttler Nikita
Khakimov for charges of “betting, wagering and irregular match results. Khakimov was part of
the Russian men’s team that won the bronze medal at the 2020 European Team
Championships.
• The 32-year-old Khakimov was found to breach BWF’s integrity regulations, including
approaching a player and offering money to manipulate a match, betting on badminton games
and deliberately destroying evidence of a corruption offence to conceal from the BWF.

Anshu Malik wins silver at Individual Wrestling World Cup in Serbia
• Indian wrestler, Anshu Malik has become the first wrestler of the country to finish on the
podium position at the Individual Wrestling World Cup in Belgrade, Serbia.
• The 19-year-old won a silver medal in the women’s 57kg category to claim first international
medal of the tournament for the country. She lost to Moldova’s Anastasia Nichita 5-1 in the
final.

OBITUARY
French fashion designer Pierre Cardin passes away
• French fashion designer Pierre Cardin, hailed for his visionary creations but also for bringing
stylish clothes to the masses, died Tuesday aged 98.
• Cardin, who was born to a low-income family in northern Italy but became a France-based
fashion superstar, died in a hospital in Neuilly in the west of Paris.
• Born into poverty in 1922 near Venice in northern Italy, his family emigrated to France when he
was a small child.
**APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS**

Kerala’s Arya Rajendran becomes India’s youngest mayor from Thiruvananthapuram

- The 21-year-old college student, Arya Rajendran has been elected the new mayor of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, of Kerala. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, Arya is the youngest person in India to occupy the post of mayor anywhere in the country.
- Arya won 54 votes out of 99 votes cast in the civic body polls in Kerala. She is also the state president of Balasangam, the children’s wing of the CPI(M). Arya is a second-year student of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) in Mathematics at the All Saints College.

**SUMMITS AND MOU’S**

Tata Sons to buy 32.67% stake in AirAsia India for $37.66 million

- In a move that is being pegged as the first step in consolidation of Tata Group’s aviation portfolio, Tata Sons will purchase 32.67 per cent stake in AirAsia India from Malaysian AirAsia Group Bhd, taking its holding in the joint-venture airline up to 83.67 per cent. In a filing to the Malaysian stock exchanges, the AirAsia Group said that the deal, which is worth $37.66 million, will see its share in the Indian budget airline go down to 16.33 per cent.
- As of date, AirAsia held a 49 per cent stake in AirAsia India, while Tata Sons held 51 per cent. In addition to this, Tata Sons also owns 51 per cent stake in full-service airline Vistara, the rest of which it is owned by Singapore Airlines.

**BANKING AND ECONOMY**

AU Small Finance, ICICI Pru Life tie up to offer life insurance solutions

- AU Small Finance Bank has announced a strategic partnership with ICICI Prudential Life Insurance to offer life insurance solutions. The tie-up aims to deliver “paperless, secure, and hassle-free life insurance”.
- Through the corporate agency arrangement, over 18 lakh customers of AU Bank across over 700 banking touchpoints in 13 states and 2 Union territories, will have easy access to the entire suite of customer-centric protection and long-term savings products of ICICI Prudential Life. AU Bank even claimed that these products will enable customers to provide financial security to themselves and their families and help them achieve their financial goals.

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

India-Vietnamese Navy conducts PASSEX-2020 in South China Sea

- The Indian Navy and Vietnamese Navy undertook the naval passage exercise PASSEX in the South China Sea. The two-day exercise was conducted as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries. The Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kiltan took part in the exercise.
- INS Kiltan, reached Vietnam’s Nha Rong Port in Ho Chi Minh City, carrying humanitarian assistance to deliver 15 tonnes of relief material for flood-affected people under Mission Sagar-
III. This mission of INS Kiltan is part of India’s Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) assistance to Friendly Foreign Countries during the ongoing pandemic.

NATIONAL NEWS

ICF develops new high-speed Vistadome coaches
- Indian Railways' Integral Coach Factory (ICF) the coach manufacturing unit located in Chennai has successfully completed the speed trials of the new design Vistadome tourist coaches.
- The new design Vistadome tourist coach manufactured by ICF has successfully completed 180kmph oscillation trial.
- Squeeze test of the above coach were already completed in ICF in the current month.
- The Vistadome coach has large glass windows, glass roof, observation lounge and rotatable seats allowing passengers to experience breathtakingly beautiful locations and sites enroute the journey.

PM to inaugurate ‘New Bhaupur- New Khurja section’ of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC)
- ‘New Bhaupur- New Khurja section’ of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) will be inaugurated by the PM Narendra Modi on 29th December, 2020 at 11 AM through video conferencing.
- During the event, Prime Minister will also inaugurate EDFC’s Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj.
- On the occasion, Governor of Uttar Pradesh Shrimati Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Shri Yogi Adityanath and Union Minister Shri Piyush Goyal will also be present.
- New Bhaupur- New Khurja section of EDFC is 351 km and situated in Uttar Pradesh. It is built at a cost of Rs 5,750 crores. The section will open new vistas of opportunity for the local industries such as aluminium industry (Pukhrayan region of Kanpur Dehat district), dairy sector (Auraiya district), textile production/block printing (Etawah district), glassware industry (Firozabad district), pottery products (Khurja of Bulandshahr district), asafoetida or ‘hing’ production (Hathras district) and locks and hardware (Aligarh district).
- The section will also decongest the existing Kanpur-Delhi mainline and will enable Indian Railways to run faster trains. A state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Prayagraj will act as the command centre for the entire route length of the EDFC.
- Globally, the OCC is one of the largest structures of its type. It consists of modern interiors, ergonomic design and best-in-class acoustics. The building is environment-friendly with a Green Building rating of GRIHA4 and is built as per norms of the ‘Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan’.
- The EDFC is 1856 route km and starts from Sahnewal near Ludhiana (Punjab). It will pass through the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand to terminate at Dankuni in West Bengal.
- It is being constructed by Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL), that has been set up as a special purpose vehicle to build and operate Dedicated Freight Corridors.
- DFCCIL is also constructing the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (1504 route km) that connects Dadri in Uttar Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai and will traverse through the states of UP, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.
SPORTS

ICC Awards of the Decade 2020 announced
- The winners of the prestigious ICC Awards of the Decade were announced on 28th December 2020. The ICC Awards of The Decade recognise the best players across Cricket over the past 10 years.

List of Winners
- ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade: MS Dhoni (India)
- ICC Men’s Awards
  - Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Male Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli (India)
  - ICC Men’s ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Virat Kohli (India)
  - ICC Men’s T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Rashid Khan (Afghanistan)
  - ICC Men’s Test Cricketer of the Decade: Steve Smith (Australia)
  - ICC Men’s Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kyle Coetzer (Scotland)
- ICC Women’s Award
  - Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
  - ICC Women’s ODI Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
  - ICC Women’s T20I Cricketer of the Decade: Ellyse Perry (Australia)
  - ICC Women’s Associate Cricketer of the Decade: Kathryn Bryce (Scotland)

OBITUARY

Veteran Dance Historian Sunil Kothari passes away
- Padma Shri awardee dance historian and critic, Sunil Kothari has passed away. He was qualified as a Chartered Accountant, before turning to the study of Indian dance forms. He authored more than 20 books on the subject of Indian dance forms.
- The noted dance scholar Kothari received numerous titles and awards for his contribution to Indian dance forms. Some of them include the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1995); the Padma Shri bestowed by the Government of India (2001); and the Life Time Achievement Award of the Dance Critics Association, New York, USA (2011).

Cinematographer Ishwar Bidri passes away
- Veteran cinematographer Ishwar Bidri, best known for his work in popular 1990s films like Andaz Apna Apna and Border, died on Sunday due to multiple health issues. He was 87.
- The noted director of photography breathed his last at a hospital in Karnataka, his son Sanjeev Bidri said.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Union Minister Shripad Naik Releases book “Sutranivednachi sutra- ek anbav”
- Union Minister of State (I/C) for AYUSH and Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik released a Konkani book “Sutranivednachi sutra- ek anbav”, by Dr Roopa Chari on 26 December, 2020. It is published by Sanjana Publications.
- Dr. Roopa Chari is a well-known personality in the field of Compering in Goa.
• This book will help aspiring youngsters, who wish to make a career in this field. This is the spontaneous art; you don’t nurture it by having any classes. With proper study, you always have to be vigilant, as compere is the link between the audience and the speaker.

**BANKING AND ECONOMY**

**TCS crosses ₹11 trln in market capitalisation**
• Tata Consultancy Services Ltd's market capitalisation surged past ₹11 trillion on Monday, making it the second Indian firm after Reliance Industries Ltd to achieve this milestone.
• Shares of TCS jumped nearly 1.2% intraday to hit an all-time high of ₹2942 a piece on the BSE with a market capitalisation of ₹11.03 trillion. So far, this year, the scrip has surged 36%.
• Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd remains India’s most valued company with an mcap of ₹12.75 trillion.
• Of the 47 brokerages tracking TCS, 26 have recommend buy, 14 have maintained sell, while 7 have put hold rating on the stock, according to Bloomberg.

**Tesla to start selling cars in India in early 2021**
• Billionaire Elon Musk’s clean energy and electric vehicle company Tesla will start operations in India early next year, confirmed Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.
• Tesla is initially expected to sell its vehicles in India, and it would also look at setting up a manufacturing facility at a later stage depending on demand.
• Gadkari has already held a few rounds of talks with top Tesla executives. Some states have also held meetings with the electric car company for sales of its vehicles in India.

**Dixon Technologies’ subsidiary to make smartphones for Motorola**
• Dixon Technologies said its wholly-owned subsidiary Padget Electronics will begin making smartphones for Motorola.
• Padget Electronics has inked an agreement with Motorola Mobility LLC for manufacturing smartphones, the statement added.
• The products will be manufactured at Padget’s manufacturing facility located at Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

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**INTERNATIONAL**

**Myanmar commissions submarine gifted by India**
• Myanmar on Saturday inducted into its navy a submarine it received from India, which of late stepped up its maritime security cooperation with its neighbours as well as other nations in the Indo-Pacific region amid growing belligerence of China.
• The INS Sindhuvir, a Kilo-class submarine of the Indian Navy, has been renamed as the UMS Minye Theinkhathu. It was commissioned by the Myanmar Navy on the occasion of its 73rd anniversary. It is the first submarine to be acquired by the Myanmar Navy.
• India handed over the INS Sindhuvir to Myanmar three years after China provided two
submarines to Bangladesh in 2017.

- The INS Sindhuvir was in service of the Indian Navy since 1988. It was refitted by Hindustan Shipyard before being handed over to the Myanmar Navy earlier this year. The Indian Navy also made arrangements for the personnel of the Myanmar Navy to operate the submarine.

**NATIONAL**

**PM Narendra Modi to flag off 100th Kisan Rail via video conference**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the 100th "Kisan Rail" from Maharashtra’s Sangola to Shalimar in West Bengal via video conferencing on Monday.
- "Kisan Rail has been a game changer in ensuring fast transportation of agriculture produce across the nation. It provides a seamless supply chain of perishable produce," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.
- The multi-commodity train service will carry vegetables such as cauliflower, capsicum, cabbage, drumstick, chilli and onion as well as fruits like grape, orange, pomegranate, banana and custard apple, it said.
- There will be no bar on the size of consignment and Loading and unloading of perishable commodities will be permitted at all stoppages en route, the PMO said.

**Jammu gets its first woman bus driver**

- Pooja Devi of Kathua district has become the first woman passenger bus driver in Jammu and Kashmir. Mother of three children, Pooja Devi ferried passengers on Jammu-Kathua route for the first time on Thursday.

**History of Sikh Gurus to be included in school syllabus: Yogi Adityanath**

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, at a Kirtan held in his residence on Sunday, announced that the history of Sikh gurus will now be included in the school curriculum in the state to educate students about the origins of the religion.
- CM Yogi made this announcement at a Gurbani Kirtan held at his residence on the occasion of 'Sahibzada Diwas', which marks the martyrdom of four 'sahibzada' (sons) of 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh and his mother Mata Gujri.

**PM Modi launched Ayushman Bharat scheme for Jammu & Kashmir**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today launched Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT scheme for the residents of Jammu and Kashmir, via video conferencing. Talking about the Jammu and Kashmir Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT scheme, PM Modi said that getting free treatment up to 5 lakh rupees under this scheme would improve the ease of living. About 6 lakh families of the state are getting the benefit of Ayushman Bharat Scheme. All 21 lakh families will now get the same benefits after the SEHAT scheme, PM Modi said.
- The prime minister further said that another benefit of this scheme would be that treatment is not limited to government and private hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir only. Rather, treatment can be availed from thousands of hospitals empanelled under this scheme in the country.
Kovind Inaugurates, Lays Foundation Stone Of Developmental Projects In Diu

- Daman and Diu/Dadra and Nagar Haveli, President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated and laid foundation stones for several projects on Saturday, according to the President's Secretariat.
- These included the inauguration of -- first academic session of IIIT Vadodara-International Campus Diu; and Kamleshwar School, Ghoghla; laying of the foundation stone for -- the construction of a school at Saudwadi; improvement of 1.3 kilometers heritage walk-way on Diu City Wall; conservation and facade restoration of heritage precincts (Zampa and market precinct); up-gradation of fruits and vegetable market at Fort Road; and development of integrated municipal solid waste management system for entire urban and rural areas of Diu.

SPORTS

International Cricket Council (ICC) announced its Test, ODI and T20I teams of the decade

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced its Test, ODI and T20I teams of the decade on Sunday and cricket fans in India were thrilled. Legendary MS Dhoni, who retired on August 15, has been named as the captain of ODI and T20I teams. whereas Virat Kohli has been declared the captain of the Test team which includes the likes of former stalwart skippers Kumar Sangakkara and Alastair Cook.
- For India, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has been named in the Test XI of the decade, men's ODI team of the decade included Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli apart from the side's captain Dhoni. Men's T20I team of the decade has four Indians - Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, MS Dhoni and Jasprit Bumrah.
- However, on the flip side no cricketer from Pakistan got a place in any of the XI's. There were representations from Australia, New Zealand, England, South Africa, West Indies, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and even Afghanistan in at least one of the three teams.

OBITUARY

Former WWE Wrestler Luke Harper Passes Away

- Professional Wrestler Jon Huber, popularly known as Luke Harper in the WWE, and Brodie Lee in the AEW has died aged 41 of non-C-19 related lung issue, an AEW official statement on social media said on Sunday.
- The professional wrestler from Rochester, New York started his career back in 2003, made his name in the independent wrestling scene, wrestling for promotions like Dragon Gate and Combat Zone Wrestling. In 2012 he won his first WWE contract, where he made a big splash in NXT and then in the WWE main roster as Luke Harper part of the ultra-popular Wyatt Family.

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NATIONAL

Himachal CM unveils 18-feet statue of Vajpayee in Shimla

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has unveiled an 18-feet tall statue of late
former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the occasion of his 96th birth anniversary at the historic Ridge in the state capital.

- The statue has been built at a cost of Rs 1.08 crore. The Ridge Maidan also houses statues of Mahatma Gandhi and former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launches E-Sampada web portal

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri has launched E-Sampada, a new web portal and mobile app on Good Governance Day. The new application provides a single-window for all the services including an allotment for over one lakh government residential accommodations, office space allotment to government organisations in 45 office complexes in 28 cities and booking of 1,176-holiday homerooms.
- The portal provides online facility to users across India to lodge complaints, submit documents and appear for the virtual hearing.
- This is a significant step towards the promotion of e-governance to enhance transparency and accountability in providing various estate services like allotment, retention, regularisation and no dues certificate.
- The real-time information on utilisation of assets and delivery of service will facilitate optimum utilisation of resources.
- The automated processes will minimize human intervention and will lead to greater transparency.

Punjab Govt launches mobile app and web portal ‘PR Insight’

- Punjab Chief Minister Captain, Amarinder Singh has launched Mobile Application and web portal called ‘PR Insight’, to improve the delivery of citizen-centric services, based upon the feedback of its citizens on government policies. The basic objective of PR Insight is to re-orient the existing schemes and programmes of the state government to the people’s satisfaction after meticulously monitoring their feedback.
- PR Insight application has been developed by the Information & Public Relations Department to provide a single repository & dashboard of all the news articles & social media posts of the State.
- This single repository of news articles and social media posts are then analysed using advance analytics and sentiment analysis tools to understand citizen feedback on Government policies and perception of Governance by the citizens.
- As many as 31 leading Newspaper agencies/portals have been integrated online with PR Insight application & portal and all the State Departments’ news articles are fetched from these newspaper agencies on a real-time basis.
- The app will monitor the citizen’s feedback and subsequently ensure responsive and transparent administration in the State.

India’s first Lithium refinery to be set up in Gujarat

- India’s first Lithium refinery is soon going to be set up in Gujarat. Manikaran Power Limited, one of the country’s largest power trading and renewable energy company will invest around Rs 1,000 crore to set up this refinery. The refinery will process Lithium ore to produce battery-
grade material. Lithium is a rare element and is usually not found in India.

- Last year, Manikaran Power had collaborated with Australian firm Neometals to tap the Mount Marion Lithium mine in Western Australia. The proposed project is expected to help Gujarat secure the raw material supply for domestic manufacturing of Lithium batteries as it looks to promote electric vehicles.

**SPORTS**

**FIFA cancels next year’s U-20, U-17 World Cups**

- FIFA has cancelled men’s U-20 and U-17 World Cup tournaments in 2021 for the novel coronavirus. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of the FIFA Council has decided to cancel the 2021 editions of the men’s FIFA U-20 World Cup and FIFA U-17 World Cup, and to appoint Indonesia and Peru respectively, who were due to host the tournaments in 2021, as the hosts of the 2023 editions.
- So Peru will host the FIFA U-17 World Cup in 2023. In the same year, the FIFA U-20 World Cup will be held by Indonesia.

**OBITUARY**

**Legendary Urdu poet Shamsur Rahman Faruqi passes away**

- Legendary Urdu poet and critic, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi has passed away, a month after recovering from C-19.
- He received Saraswati Samman in 1996 for his work ‘She’r-e Shor-Angez’, a four-volume study of the eighteenth-century poet Mir Taqi Mir. The Government of India awarded him the civilian honour of Padma Shri in 2009.

**Former England batsman John Edrich passes away**

- Former English first-class batsman John Edrich has passed away. He was amongst the best players of his generation, during a career that ran from 1956 to 1978. He played 77 test matches for England, and scored more than 5,000 runs, spanning 13 years between 1963 and 1976.
- He scored a triple-century during a test match in 1965 that is the fifth-highest Test score for England.

**BOOKS AND AUTHORS**


- The new book discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the common way of life while suggesting solutions to the ongoing crisis triggered by the disease. The book discusses how the pandemic has influenced the education system, business, politics, public safety, foreign policy, law, medicine, economy and development of countries.