

British PM invites Prime Minister Modi to attend UK hosted G-7 summit next year



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has invited India to attend G7 Summit next year. Mr Johnson has sent a letter inviting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the summit. UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab called on Mr Modi and handed over the letter in New Delhi. Prime Minister Modi has accepted the invitation.

G7 members include US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. This year, the G7 grouping will also reportedly witness an expansion and will include ten democracies, naming it D10.

Brazil questions transparency in Chinese coronavirus vaccine's 'emergency use' approval



Brazilian health regulator Anvisa has said that Chinese health authorities had not been transparent in approving its COVID-19 vaccine 'CoronaVac' for emergency use. CoronaVac, produced by the Chinese private laboratory Sinovac is currently undergoing phase 3 clinical trials in Sao Paulo.

The health regulator in a statement noted that while the vaccine has had an emergency use authorization in China since June, the country's authorities have not been transparent about the criteria used for granting this authorization.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has repeatedly cast doubt on the CoronaVac vaccine.

Human Freedom Index 2020: India slips 17 spots down to 111th rank



The Human Freedom Index 2020, a worldwide ranking of civil, economic and personal freedom, released, placed India at the 111th spot out of 162 countries. India ranked 94 on the index in 2019. India's scored 6.30 out of 10 in personal freedom and 6.56 in economic freedom. The country's overall human freedom score was 6.43. New Zealand, Switzerland and Hong Kong bagged the first three spots.

The index was published by American think tank Cato Institute and Fraser Institute in Canada. It takes into account 76 indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedoms to rank 162 countries from 2008 to 2018.

Virtual Summit: India and Bangladesh sign 7 MoUs, agreements



India and Bangladesh signed seven MoUs and agreements during the virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The agreements include a framework of understanding in Hydrocarbon sector, framework agreement on High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP), protocol on transborder elephant conservation, an MoU on the supply of equipment and improvement of Garbage and solid waste disposal, MoU in the field of agriculture, an MoU between National Museum Delhi and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial museum, Dhaka and terms of reference for India Bangladesh CEO forum.

The agreements and MoUs were signed in Dhaka by the High Commissioner of India Vikram Doraiswami on behalf of India and officials of Bangladesh.

Defence Acquisition Council approves proposals worth Rs 27,000 crore to procure equipment from domestic industry



Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) meeting, headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, approved proposals to procure equipment worth Rs 27,000 crore from the domestic industry. DAC approved Capital Acquisition proposals of various weapons, platforms, equipment and systems required by the Indian Army, the Navy and Air Force at an approximate overall cost of Rs 28,000 crore. Acquisition proposals approved include the DRDO designed and developed Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems for the Indian Air Force, Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels for the Indian Navy and Modular Bridges for the Indian Army.

Farmers have the right to continue protest: SC



The Supreme Court of India said farmers have a constitutional right to continue with their “absolutely perfect” protest as long as their dissent against the three controversial agricultural laws did not slip into violence. Acknowledging the right of farmers to hold non-violent protests, the Supreme Court suggested that the Centre put implementation of the new farm laws on hold while putting forward the idea of constituting an impartial and independent committee, which may include experts like P Sainath, to end the impasse.

North India reels under cold wave conditions; Rajasthan's Sikar records lowest minimum temperature of 0.5°C



North India is reeling under cold wave conditions. Lowest Minimum Temperature of 0.5 degree Celsius was recorded in Sikar in east Rajasthan. According to India Meteorological Department, cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are very likely in some pockets over Punjab, Haryana & Chandigarh, West Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan during next 3 days. Cold Wave to Severe Cold Wave conditions are very likely in some pockets over Punjab, Haryana & Chandigarh, West Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan during next 3 days.

ISRO launches new communication satellite CMS-01 successfully



The Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO, has successfully launched the country's new communication satellite CMS-01 in the intended orbit in space. The workhorse rocket PSLV-C50 carrying the satellite lifted off from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. The new satellite CMS-01 will take over the mantle from the ageing telecommunication satellite GSAT-12 that has outlived its planned operational period by rendering seamless service for 11 years. The CMS-01's intended operational life is seven years.

Govt. finalises GPS-based technology toll collection to ensure seamless movement of vehicles across country



Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has said that the Government has finalised GPS-based technology toll collection to ensure seamless movement of vehicles across the country. He said, this will ensure India becomes 'toll booth free' in the next two years. He explained that the toll amount will be deducted directly from the bank account based on the movement of vehicles. He said, while now all commercial vehicles are coming with vehicle tracking systems, the Government will come up with some plan to install GPS technology in old vehicles.

Over 10 lakh cases worth settlement value of nearly Rs 3228 cr disposed of in last National Lok Adalat of year 2020



Over 10 lakh cases worth settlement value of nearly 3228 crore rupees disposed of in last National Lok Adalat of the year 2020 organised through both virtual and physical mode in the country. The Lok Adalat was organized under the aegis of the National Legal Services Authority on 12th of this month in which requisite safety protocol in view of the COVID-19 pandemic was strictly observed. A total number of 8152 Benches were constituted by 31 State Legal Services Authority to conduct the National Lok Adalat. It was successful in disposing of 10 lakh 42 thousand 816 cases. Out of the total cases disposed of, over five lakh 60 thousand cases were at the pre-litigation stage and 4 lakh 82 thousand cases were those which were pending in the courts.

Lok Adalat, conducted by National Legal Services Authority is an alternative method of dispute resolution. It is a forum where disputes or cases pending in the court of law or at pre-litigation stage are settled amicably. Lok Adalats have been given statutory status under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

Govt. plans \$60-bn investment to bolster gas infrastructure



Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the government had planned a \$60-billion investment for creating gas infrastructure in the country till 2024, and that gas's share in the energy mix is expected to rise to 15% by 2030. Currently, gas accounts for 6% in the country's total energy mix.

GDP to contract 7.8% in FY21: ICRA



Domestic rating agency Icri Ratings expects the technical recession in the country's economy to end in the fourth quarter of the current fiscal, limiting the contraction in the GDP to 7.8 per cent in the financial year 2021. In the second quarter of financial year 2021, GDP contracted 7.5 per cent as against a decline of 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter.

With a steady performance of the agricultural sector and a lagged recovery in the contact-intensive parts of the services sector, the agency forecasts a small contraction of one per cent in the Indian GDP in the third quarter of financial year 2021.

Brazil's Marcopolo to exit bus body making JV with Tatas



Brazil's Marcopolo S.A., one of the world's largest bus and coach manufacturers, has agreed to sell its 49% shareholding in Tata Marcopolo Motors Ltd. (TMML) to joint venture partner Tata Motors Ltd. for Rs. 99.96 crore in cash. After the purchase, TMML will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Motors.

Retail NPAs will be higher in second half of FY21: Axis Bank



Retail non-performing assets (NPAs) will be higher in the third and fourth quarter of FY21 and will go back to the pre-COVID-19 levels only in the new fiscal year, Axis Bank said. The third largest private sector lender, however, said that the asset quality situation is much better than what was feared initially and stressed that it has adequate provisions to take care of the reverses.

Kiren Rijju lauds role of Ayush Ministry for creating perfect platform to launch Yogasana as competitive sport



The Centre has decided to promote Yogasana as a competitive sport. National Yoga Sports Federation (NYSF) recognized as a National Sports Federation for promotion & development of Yogasana. Presently Ministry of AYUSH and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports are closely working together to establish yogasana as a competitive sport globally.

Russia banned from Olympics, FIFA WC



Russia will be barred from competing as a nation at the Olympic Games, Winter Olympics and football World Cup over the next two years after the Court of Arbitration for Sport partly upheld a suspension imposed for breaching anti-doping rules. In 2019, Russia was handed a four-year ban from major international sporting events by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

WADA declared the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) non-compliant over inconsistencies in anti-doping data discovered during an investigation. Russian athletes wishing to compete at the Tokyo and Beijing Games will be able to do so, but only under a neutral banner.

Australian Open to begin on Feb. 8



The Australian Open is set to begin on February 8, three weeks later than planned, as part of a pandemic-altered 2021 tennis calendar released by the ATP. The ATP said that men's qualifying for the season's first Grand Slam tournament is being moved to Doha, Qatar, from Jan. 10-13. That will be followed by a period of about 2 1/2 weeks set aside for travel to Melbourne and a 14-day quarantine period for players and their coaches or other support staff.

Rajeev Shukla set to be BCCI vice-president



Former Rajya Sabha MP Rajiv Shukla is all set to be elected unopposed as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president. The members of the Indian cricket board have decided in favour of the senior Congress leader returning to the post which he held during N Srinivasan's tenure as the board president. Rajiv Shukla's election as the new vice-president of the BCCI will be ratified during the Annual General Meeting in Ahmedabad scheduled for December 24. Meanwhile, IPL chairman Brijesh Patel and Khairul Jamal Majumdar have been re-elected as members of the governing council.

Anshu Malik grabs silver



Anshu Malik won a silver in the 57kg category of the wrestling World Cup. She lost the gold medal bout 5-1 to Moldova's Anastasia Nichita. In the men's section, Narsingh Pancham Yadav and Ravi Dahiya suffered opening-round losses.