

US President declares emergency in New York due to severe winter storm



US President Joe Biden has declared an emergency in the state of New York due to a severe winter storm and ordered Federal assistance to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from a severe winter storm. It said, the action authorizes the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to coordinate all disaster relief efforts which have the purpose of alleviating the hardship and suffering caused by the emergency on the local population, and to provide appropriate assistance for required emergency measures.

At least 12 states, namely Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Wisconsin reported a total of 50 deaths. The city of Buffalo in northeastern New York state had the most casualties, with more than a meter of snow falling over the weekend.

Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo in Balkans simmering



Reports are emerging that the tensions between Serbia and Kosovo in the Balkans are simmering. Serbian President has now put his armed forces on highest level of alert and deployed armaments along the border with Kosovo. This comes days after Serbian Army chief visited the border amid blockades and firing incidents near NATO patrolling troops in the past weeks. The Serbian army says it is at its highest level of combat readiness after weeks of escalating tensions between Serbia and Kosovo.

Kosovo, which has an overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian majority, broke away from Serbia after a war in 1998-99.

UNSC 'deeply alarmed' on Taliban's decision to ban women, girls from universities



The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has expressed concerns over the Taliban's decision to close all schools above the sixth grade for girls in Afghanistan. The UNSC said that it is deeply alarmed by the reports of the Taliban have prohibited women and girls from attending universities. The UNSC called for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

The Security Council called on the Taliban to reopen schools and swiftly reverse these policies and practices, which represents an increasing erosion of the fundamental freedoms of people in the country. The Taliban reportedly has also forbidden female employees of NGOs and international organizations from reporting to work.

Mandatory Military Service to extend from 4 months to 1 year, says Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen



Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has said that mandatory military service would be extended from four months to one year. Speaking at a press conference in Taipei, President Tsai announced new plans to bolster Taiwan's defence in the event of an attack from Beijing. The decision to extend mandatory military service comes amid growing tensions with China, which claims the self-ruled island as its territory. President Tsai chaired a national security meeting to discuss reinforcing the island's Civil Defence.

Railways set to modernise its stations under Amrit Bharat Station scheme



The Indian Railways is set to modernise its stations under the Amrit Bharat Station scheme. This scheme envisages the development of stations on a continuous basis with a long-term vision. The scheme will cater to the introduction of new amenities as well as the upgradation and replacement of existing amenities. This scheme will also cover the stations where detailed techno-economic feasibility studies have been conducted or are being conducted but the work for the construction of Roof Plazas has not been taken up yet. The Ministry said, the scheme aims to relocate redundant or old buildings in a cost-efficient manner so that space is released for improving passengers' amenities.

Bharat Biotech's nasal vaccine 'iNOVACC' to be available at Rs 325 for govt hospitals, Rs 800 for Pvt centers



Bharat Biotech has said that its nasal vaccine against Covid-19, iNOVACC, would be available to the public from the fourth week of January. It said that the vaccine will cost 800 rupees for private markets and 325 rupees for governments. Bharat Biotech's iNOVACC is the world's first intranasal Covid vaccine to receive approval for the primary 2-dose schedule as well as a heterologous booster dose. The nasal vaccine will be rolled out as a booster dose for those above 18 years of age. iNOVACC has been developed by Bharat Biotech in partnership with America's Washington University.

Centre approves projects worth around Rs 2,700 for developing sewerage infrastructure in Ganga basin



Centre has approved projects worth around 2,700 crore rupees for developing sewerage infrastructure in the Ganga basin. Out of these projects, 12 pertain to develop the sewerage infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. In West Bengal, a big project for Rejuvenation of River Adi Ganga, tributary of Ganga, in Kolkata was approved at an estimated cost of Rs. 653.67 crore that includes construction of 3 Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) of 10 Million Litres per Day (MLD), 11.60 MLD and 3.5 MLD capacities.

Power Ministry, DRDO sign MoU for implementation of Early Warning System for Vulnerable Hydro Projects and Power Stations



Power Ministry and the Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, for implementation of Early Warning System for Vulnerable Hydro Projects and Power Stations. It is to work jointly towards developing suitable mitigation measures against avalanches, landslides, glaciers, glacial lakes and other geo-hazards. EWS is an integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction, disaster risk assessment, communication and preparedness for timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events.

The expertise of DRDO will also be utilized in developing comprehensive EWS for vulnerable hydro projects and power stations in hilly regions.

Prashasan Gaon ki Ore 2022 achieves significant progress in Redressal of Public Grievances & Disposal of Service Delivery Applications



Prashasan Gaon ki Ore 2022 which was launched as part of Good Governance week, has achieved significant progress in the Redressal of Public Grievances and the Disposal of Service Delivery Applications. The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions in a statement said that under this campaign, 53 lakh 80 thousand public grievances were redressed and over three crore service delivery applications were disposed of. Besides, 949 innovations in governance were documented and 257 Vision India@2047 District level documents were uploaded on the Good Governance Week portal.

India will become third largest economy by 2035 : CEBR



The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), a British consultancy, has said India will become third largest economy by 2035 from the current fifth spot. In its annual World Economic League Table, it said that over the next five years, India's annual rate of GDP growth is expected to average 6.4 percent after which growth is expected to average 6.5 percent in the subsequent nine years.

It said on the other hand, the global economy will face recession in 2023 mainly due to rises in interest rates by the central banks to arrest higher inflation. In its annual World Economic League Table, it said global economy surpassed 100 trillion Dollar for the first time in 2022, but will stall in 2023 as policy makers continue their fight against soaring prices.

Russia bans oil supplies to countries that introduced price caps, says Kremlin's



Russia has announced to ban oil supplies to countries that have introduced price caps on Russian oil and petroleum products in response to Moscow's operation in Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree, saying the supply of Russian oil and oil products to foreign legal entities and individuals is prohibited if the contracts for these supplies directly or indirectly are using a price cap. The decree will be in effect for five months from 1st February until 1st July next year. The price cap which was agreed upon by the G7 group of nations, Australia, and the EU came into force on 5th of this month, prohibiting countries from paying more than 60 US Dollars per barrel of Russian oil.

Russia is the world's second-largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia.

Government says, AVGC sector to provide employment to over 20 lakh people in next 10 years



The Union government has said that the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comic (AVGC) sector has the potential to provide employment to over 20 lakh people in the coming 10 years. It is expected that the sector will witness 16 to 17 percent growth rate in the next decade. Recently, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur was presented the Task Force Report on 'Realising AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics - Extended Reality) Sector Potential in India' by the Chairman of the Task Force, Apurva Chandra. The AVGC sector in the country has witnessed an unprecedented growth rate in recent times, with many global players entering the Indian talent pool to avail of offshore delivery of services. India today contributes about 2.5 to 3 billion dollars out of the estimated 260 to 275 billion dollars worldwide in the AVGC market.

Airbag market to grow to ₹7,000 crore by FY27: report



The airbag market is expected to register a compounded annual growth rate of 25-30 per cent over next four years to touch ₹6,000-₹7,000 crore by FY27 from the current level of nearly ₹2,500 crore due to the mandatory increase in number of airbags in vehicles, said a study by ICRA. The study pointed out that ₹1,000-1,500 crore will be spent in the next 12-18 months for capacity enhancements and localisation.

Government recognises e-sports as part of multisports events



The Union Government has officially recognised e-sports in the country. According to a gazette notification, E-Sports will now be a part of the “multisports event” category in India under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. E-Sports, short for electronic sports, is a form of competition using video games. The decision is likely to have significant effects on India’s E-sports sector and boost the growth of the country’s E-Sports industry.

India to bid for hosting 2036 Olympic Games, says Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur



Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur have said India will bid for hosting the Olympic Games in 2036. Mr Thakur said that government will present a roadmap before the full members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during the IOC session in Mumbai in September 2023. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has said it was in preliminary discussions with 10 cities but has not revealed a timeframe for when it plans to award the 2036 edition. Paris, Los Angeles and Brisbane host the next three Games.