

US Supreme Court keeps Trump-era border policy in place



The US Supreme Court has voted to keep in place a controversial Trump-era policy that blocked thousands of people from crossing the US-Mexico border. Title 42 gives the government power to automatically expel undocumented migrants seeking entry. The potential lifting of the policy had prompted concerns that the number of migrants at the border would rise. The Biden administration said it would comply with the ruling but called for reform of immigration policy.

The Title 42 policy - applied many times in March 2020 - was originally due to expire on the 21st of December but, two days before the deadline, Chief Supreme Court Justice John Roberts blocked its termination.

Japan PM floats possibility of polls before defence Budget tax hike



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has floated the possibility of calling a snap election before a tax increase aimed at funding the country's defence Budget comes into place "sometime after 2024". The government is set to implement tax increases to cover a shortfall of 1 trillion yen (\$7.47 billion).

18 children dead due to cough syrup made by Indian firm, says Uzbekistan



The Health Ministry of Uzbekistan said 18 children, with acute respiratory disease, have died from taking excessive doses of a cough syrup, Doc-1 Max, manufactured by Marion Biotech, an Indian firm. The children consumed “excessive amounts” of the cough syrup, which contained ethylene glycol, a substance that ought not to be present in cough syrup. This comes days after a parliamentary panel in The Gambia found “unacceptable levels” of diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol in cough syrups made by Haryana-based Maiden Pharma. These cough syrups were linked to instance of acute kidney injury that is believed to be responsible for the deaths of at least 63 children.

Following the World Health Organisation’s (WHO’s) warning on October 5, linking four syrups to the deaths in The Gambia, Maiden Pharma’s export licence has been suspended. However, India has said that the WHO has drawn a “premature link” between the deaths of the children and the India-made cough syrups.

Indian scientist honored as one of Europe's top talents in biology



An Indian scientist has been chosen to join the prestigious European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) Young Investigator network, recognising her as one of the top talents in biology in Europe. Dr Mahima Swamy, who hails from Bengaluru, is one of the University of Dundee's most revered experts within their School of Life Sciences where she heads a research group that investigates immune responses in the intestine. Mahima joins 23 other researchers to become a part of the network of 135 current and 390 former members of the EMBO programme.

India grants permission to NEA to export additional 40 megawatts of electricity from two more hydroelectric projects



India has given permission to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) to export additional 40 megawatts of electricity from two more hydroelectric projects. According to NEA, the Central Electricity Authority of India has approved the sale of surplus power from two more hydropower projects - 25 MW Kabeli B-1 and 20 MW Lower Modi - at competitive rates in the Indian energy market. With this, 452.6 MW surplus power can be exported to India from 10 hydropower projects.

NEA has generated a net income of 11.16 billion rupees via trading 1.36 billion units of surplus power at a competitive rate in the Indian energy market as of the 18th of December.

Praveen Kumar Srivastava appointed Acting CVC



Vigilance Commissioner Praveen Kumar Srivastava has been appointed as the Acting Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC). Mr. Srivastava's appointment comes after Suresh N. Patel completed his term as the chief of the anti-corruption watchdog Central Vigilance Commission on December 24. The commission is headed by a CVC and can have a maximum of two Vigilance Commissioners. Besides Mr. Srivastava, former Intelligence Bureau chief Arvind Kumar is the Vigilance Commissioner.

G-20 campaigns for online safety, digital innovation unveiled



Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, Communications and Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw has launched the G20 Digital Innovation Alliance (DIA) and a “stay safe online” campaign, with the aim of digitally transforming the global economy in a secure cyber environment. As India takes on the G20 presidency to be hosted next year, the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeiTY) — the nodal ministry for the G20 Digital Economy Working Group (DEWG) — will focus on three priority areas. These are digital public infrastructure (DPI), cyber security, and digital skill development, together with the “stay safe online” campaign and DIA programme during the G20 summit.

The open-source architecture of Aadhaar and the unified payment interface (UPI) are expected to be showcased at the summit.³

Air Suvidha may reopen for travellers from 5 countries



The Union government could resume mandatory self-declaration of COVID-19 status on the Air Suvidha portal for travellers from Japan, South Korea, Thailand, China and Singapore, Health Ministry said. Last Saturday, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said a negative RT-PCR test would be made mandatory for tourists arriving from these four countries. However, the government is yet to update its guidelines for international travellers. The guidelines were last updated on December 22, 2022, which requires random testing for 2% of passengers on each international flight.

Norms to rank cities based on financial governance launched



The Union government has launched guidelines for a new finance-based ranking of cities, which would evaluate urban units on 15 key parameters, including resource mobilisation, expenditure performance and fiscal governance. A separate ranking will also evaluate cities on beautification. The rankings are aimed at motivating city and State officials to implement municipal financial reforms. A 'City Beauty Competition' initiative was also launched to rank cities on accessibility and aesthetics.

Rajasthan govt receives award for 'effective government communication'



Rajasthan government's Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) has been honoured with the "Effective Government Communication Award" for taking public welfare schemes through digital media to the general public and the beneficiaries. The award was given by the Public Relations Society of India (PSRI) at Bhopal. The department has done innovations like the Information e-Bulletin, Sujus Video Bulletin, and Sujus Awaaz (Podcast) through which information about daily news, interviews of beneficiaries, and important government decisions are made available.

Sri Lanka expects tourist arrivals to hit 720,000 by end of the year



Indian tourists account for 17 percent of all tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka in 2022. Close to one lakh twenty thousand tourists visited the island nation from India this year out of a total of seven lakh. Russia was the second largest source market with close to 87,000 tourists this year. Sri Lanka's Tourism Minister Harin Fernando said, the Government expects tourist arrivals to hit 720,000 in total by the end of the year. The number of tourist arrivals in the year 2021 stood at just over one lakh ninety-four thousand.

Tourism which contributes over four billion dollars to the Sri Lankan economy annually was hit hard for the last two years due to the pandemic and lockdown.

Reliance Jio introduces 5G services in 11 cities



Reliance Jio introduced 5G services in 11 cities, including Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Mysuru, Nashik, Aurangabad and Chandigarh, marking the largest multi-State roll-out of the services till date. The services have also gone live in Mohali, Panchkula, Zirakpur, Kharar and Derabassi. Jio users in the cities will be invited to the Jio Welcome Offer, to experience unlimited data at 1 Gbps-plus speeds, at no additional cost starting Wednesday.

Bharti mulls up to ₹28,000 cr. network capital expenditure, says no premium price for 5G



Telecom operator Bharti Airtel plans to invest ₹27,000-₹28,000 crore in its telecom network with a focus on 5G roll-out. While the telco is planning to raise capital expenditure by 10-15%, it has no plans to charge a premium rate for 5G services as it has not worked in many countries that tried to do so. According to data shared by the Telecom Ministry, Bharti Airtel had rolled out 3,293 5G base stations till November 26.

Unregistered person can get GST refund on revoked pact



Unregistered persons can claim Goods and Services Tax (GST) refunds for cancelled contracts or premature termination of insurance policies by obtaining temporary registration on the GST portal, the Finance Ministry has said. The new functionality is available on the GST portal and the unregistered person can obtain a temporary registration on the portal using his Permanent Account Number (PAN).

RBI approves Baskar Babu's re-appointment as Suryoday Bank's Chief for 3 years



The Reserve Bank of India has approved the re-appointment of Baskar Babu Ramachandran as the MD & CEO of Suryoday Small Finance Bank for three years effective January 23, 2023. Babu, the founder and MD & CEO of Suryoday SFB, sold bank's 50 lakh shares on December 16 for ₹55.44 crore to close a loan for exercising warrants to maintain the promoter's stake at the minimum of 26 per cent for the first 5 years (up to January 22, 2022) as per RBI regulations.

Hockey India announces cash prizes for Indian team & support staff ahead of World Cup



Hockey India (HI) announced cash prizes for the Indian team and support staff ahead of next month's FIH men's World Cup in Bhubaneswar-Rourkela. India will begin its campaign against Spain on the 13th of January and HI decided to reward the team members with 25 lakh rupees each and the support staff with five lakh rupees each for a gold medal-winning feat at the prestigious quadrennial event. A silver medal would see the players walk away with 15 lakh rupees and the support staff would be awarded three lakh rupees, while a bronze medal will see them being awarded 10 lakh rupees each, while the support staff would be entitled to a prize of two lakh rupees.