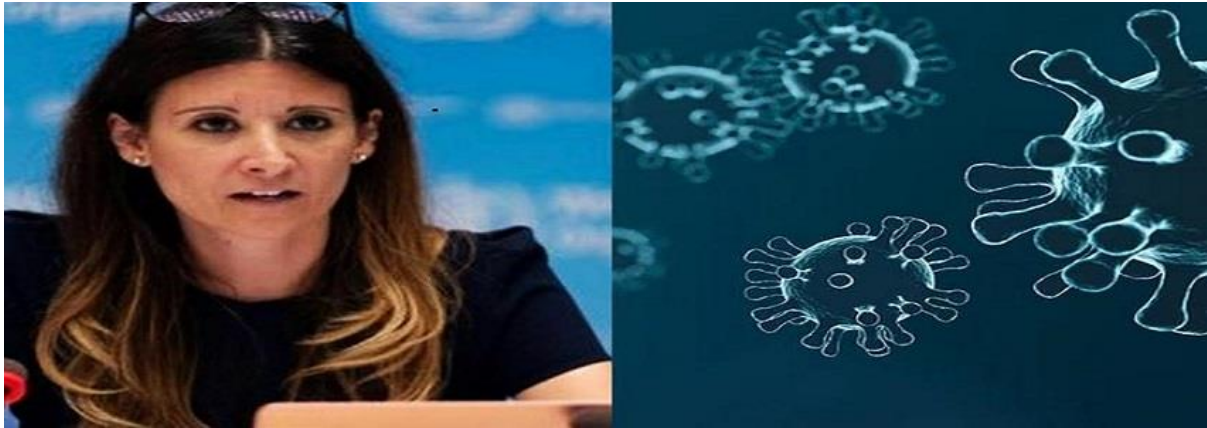
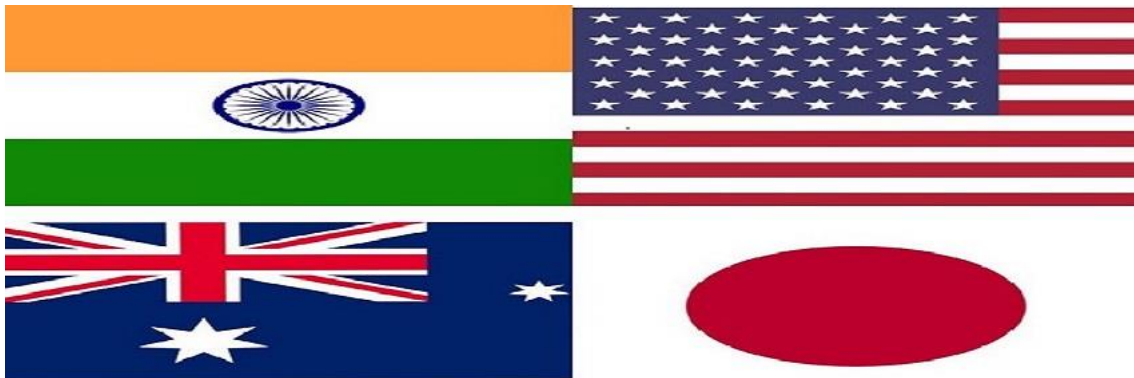


## Possibility of new COVID variants really high, warns WHO



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that the Omicron variant of COVID will not be the last one and the possibility of other new variants is really high. During the latest press briefing, the WHO epidemiologist and technical lead on Covid-19 Dr Maria Van Kerkhove warned that the next Covid-19 variant will be more transmissible, and perhaps, more deadly than its predecessors. She said, the global health agency is tracking four different versions of Omicron. According to the UN health agency's latest report, the Omicron variant is increasingly dominant making up nearly 97 per cent of all cases.

## Quad Ministers set to meet in Australia



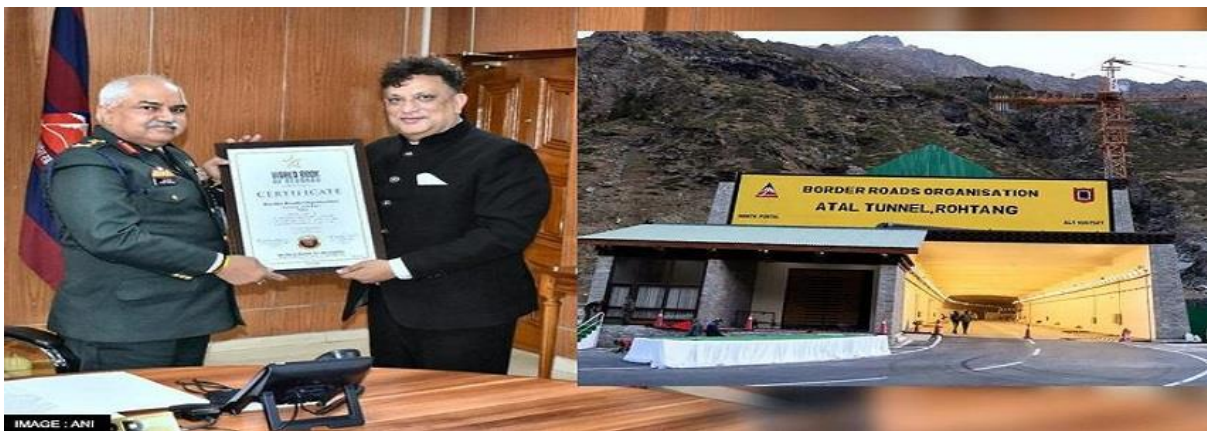
External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will begin a visit to Australia and attend a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Quad (India, Australia, United States, Japan), which is expected to discuss cooperation on vaccines, technology and regional security issues including related to China. Quad meeting will see the four ministers “exchange views on regional strategic issues given their shared vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

## India rejects references to J&K, CPEC in China and Pakistan joint statement



India has rejected the references to Jammu and Kashmir and the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in the joint statement between China and Pakistan issued on 6th of this month. In response to media queries in this regard, External Affairs Ministry's spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said that India has always rejected such references and its position is well known to China and Pakistan. He said, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh have been, are, and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of India.

## Atal Tunnel certified by World Book of Records as World's Longest Highway Tunnel



Atal Tunnel has officially been certified by the World Book of Records as the World's Longest Highway Tunnel above 10 thousand Feet. Director General of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) Lieutenant General Rajeev Chaudhry received the award for the stupendous achievement of the organization in constructing this engineering marvel connecting Manali to the Lahaul - Spiti Valley. The 9.02 kilometers long strategically significant Atal Tunnel, that runs under the Rohtang Pass was constructed on the Manali - Leh Highway under the challenging conditions of freezing temperatures in extremely difficult terrain.

## **Govt bans import of foreign drones to promote Make-In-India initiative**



As part of efforts to promote domestic manufacturing of drones in the country, the Government has banned import of foreign drones with certain exceptions. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade DGFT has issued a notification banning the import of foreign drones. However, import of drones for Research and Development, defence and security purposes have been exempted from the ban but such imports will require due clearances.

## **29 new integrated textile parks to be established for benefit of small players: Piyush Goyal informs Parliament**



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal told the Lok Sabha, works are on establishing 29 new integrated textile parks in the country to benefit small players in the sector. During Question Hour, he said 27 such facilities have already been made operational in the country under the Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks for which the Centre has released about 1478 crore rupees.

He said the initiative is to help improve the ecosystem for the crucial textile sector in the country. He added, the textile parks have attracted an investment of 13,475 crore rupees, creating more than one lakh, two thousand jobs.

## NITI Aayog announces 5 most improved aspirational districts in Agriculture, Water Resources sector

**Agriculture & Water Resources**  
Presenting the top 5 Aspirational Districts - Champions of Change Delta Ranking, December 2021.

1	Malkangiri, Odisha
2	Chhatarpur, MP
3	Baramulla, J&K
4	Ramgarh, Jharkhand
5	Begusarai, Bihar

#AspirationalDistricts

NITI Aayog has announced the five most improved aspirational districts in the Agriculture and Water Resources sector for December 2021. Malkangiri in Odisha tops the list. It is followed by Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh and Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir. Ramgarh in Jharkhand and Begusarai in Bihar also feature in the list. This is as per NITI Aayog's Delta Rankings.

## India's mRNA vaccine likely by April



Data from human trials of India's first homegrown mRNA COVID-19 vaccine are likely to be presented to authorities for evaluation by the end of the month, and company officials are aiming to roll out the product before April. The mRNA vaccine being developed by Pune-based Genovra Biopharmaceuticals is currently in phase 2/3 trials to evaluate the safety, tolerability and immunogenicity of the candidate vaccine in healthy subjects. Around 4,000 volunteers have been recruited for the trial. India has so far approved at least six vaccines that can be manufactured locally but only two — Covishield and Covaxin — have been administered to over 99% Indians.

## Suicides due to job loss highest in 2020: Centre



Over 16,000 people committed suicide due to bankruptcy or indebtedness while 9,140 people ended their lives due to unemployment between 2018 and 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs informed the Rajya Sabha. As many as 9,140 people ended their lives due to unemployment, the highest number of such cases — 3,548 were reported in 2020, the year a lockdown was imposed in the country due to COVID-19 and large-scale job losses and economic slowdown were reported in many sectors.

## Department of Space to revise existing policies to facilitate private sector participation in Space activities: Govt



The Union Government said the Department of Space is revising the existing policies to facilitate private sector participation in Space activities. In a written reply in Lok Sabha, the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Dr. Jitendra Singh said new policy framework is being drafted to address various space sectors such as SpaceCom, Remote Sensing, Technology Transfer, Navigation, Space Transportation, Space exploration and Space Situational Awareness. He said, in the Startup India portal, around 75 start-ups are shown under the space technology category.

### **Rs 1,50,000 crore sought from LIC for funding infrastructure development of Railway for 5 years: Govt in Parliament**



Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said one lakh fifty thousand crore rupees have been sought from Life Insurance Corporation of India, LIC, for funding infrastructure development of Railways for five years. In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, he said Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) had given one lakh one thousand two hundred thirty-four crore rupees from financial year 2016 to 2020 for financing Railway projects which include 20,500 crore rupees of LIC funds.

Mr. Vaishnaw said these funds were utilized throughout enhancement projects of Railways, mostly Doubling and Electrification projects.

### **Centre infused Rs 44,720 crore in 2019 to revive BSNL and MTNL, now both are financially improving: Ashwini Vaishnaw**



Communications minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the financial positions of the public sector telecom providers BSNL and MTNL have started showing signs of improvement. Answering questions in the Lok Sabha, he said the Centre infused an amount of 44,720 crore in 2019 to revive both the loss-making units. He said the companies were inherited by the NDA Government in a bad shape, and said they have been enabled to provide 4G services and added, works are also on to help them offer 5G services.

## **Bangladesh GDP grows at 6.91 percent, per capita income USD 2591**



The Bangladesh economy registered an impressive 6.91 percent growth in the Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 exceeding the provisional estimate by 1.51 percent, according to the report of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BSS). The GDP growth rate in 2019-20 was recorded to be 3.45 percent. The accelerated growth rate has taken place on the back of the rebound in the industrial sector, especially the cottage, small, medium and large industries.

The size of Bangladesh GDP stood at USD 416 billion compared to USD 411 billion in the primary estimate. The per capita income of Bangladesh now stands at USD 2591 rising from the previously estimated USD 2554.

## **Bosch to invest Rs. 2,000 cr. in India in next five years**



Technology and services supplier Bosch said it would invest a total of Rs. 2,000 crore in India, in the next five years, in addition to the Rs. 8,000 crore it had already pumped into the country over the past decade. The company would invest ₹1,000 crore towards the localisation of advanced automotive technologies while an equal amount of investment would be made in building digital platforms like Mobility Marketplace and Mobility Cloud Platform.

## Amazon announces season 2 of start up mentoring program



Amazon India announced the launch of the second season of its support programme for Indian start-ups aiming to reach customers around the world. The Global Selling Propel supports early-stage start-ups in the consumer products space to get into international markets and create global brands. Participating start-ups have a chance to win an equity free grant of \$100,000 from Amazon as well as free AWS (Amazon Web Services) credits worth \$10,000

## Indian Men's hockey team defeat South Africa by 10-2 in their second match of FIH Pro Hockey League



Indian Men's hockey team defeated hosts South Africa by 10-2 in their second match of the FIH Pro Hockey League at Potchefstroom. New comer Jugraj Singh led the Indian charge by scoring three goals in 4th, 6th, 23rd minute with his impeccable drag flicks. Harmanpreet Singh scored in the 2nd minute, Abhishek in 12th, Gursahibjit Singh in 24th and 36th minute, Dilpreet Singh in 25th and 58th and Mandeep Singh scored a goal in the 27th minute of the match.



## India beat West Indies by 44 runs in second ODI in Ahmedabad



India beat West Indies by 44 runs in the second One-Day-International to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad . Earlier, put into bat first, Rohit Sharma-led Team India scored 237 for nine in the stipulated 50 overs. Surya Kumar Yadav with 64 runs and K L Rahul with 49 runs made valuable contributions. In reply, West Indies were bowled out for 193 in 46 overs as Prasad Krishna picked up four wickets while Shardul Narendra Thakur took two wickets for the hosts.